The Clown and His Daughter

by

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"All Being is a Shadow, an Illusion,
a Reflection cast on a Mirror."
—Molla Jami

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I

THE Sinekli Bakkal—that is, "The Fly-Plagued Grocer"—was the name generally given to a wide area, containing streets both rich and poor, in the southern part of Istanbul. In reality it was a tiny back street which owned the title.

Ramshackle, cracked wooden houses, richly darkened with age, leaned towards one another from either side of the street, their eaves nearly touching. Red geraniums blossomed in the windows, and the heads of women, mostly old, bent over their embroidery. The lattices were often lifted to give light to the workers, perhaps to enable them to see one another too, for they carried on a lively gossip from window to window.

Brilliant patches of blue sky peeped between the staggered eaves, but the depths of the street remained cool and full of shadows. Dirty pools formed among the dilapidated cobbles and caught the gold light of the morning. Wistaria trellises, extending from side to side over the fountain at the corner, cast a purple shade. Women, barefooted, women with red kerchiefs over their heads, swarmed round the fountain, holding red copper cans in their hands, waiting for their turn to fill them with water. Children, half-clad and dirty-nosed, played around the puddles. Above the sombre purple of the wistaria and the dark house-tops a single slim white minaret pierced the blue.

In the middle of the street stood its solitary shop with an enormous placard over its door, "Istanbul Groceries." The

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humbler the quarter the more pretentious the name, for that was the rule of the place. The building of next importance was the house of the Imam by the fountain. Its door opened on another street. Only the back windows overlooked the Sinekli Bakkal. But as it had three stories, and, moreover, dispensed birth and marriage certificates, and permits for burials—all of which were to be obtained only from the Imam—people pointed it out to strangers as if it really were in their own street.

The Imam himself was respected by a few and feared by all. He himself walked the humble black earth of the Sinekli-Bakkal with the awe-inspiring dignity and pride of a saint. But this saintly pride received a great blow when his daughter Emineh eloped with an actor.

Tewfik, the nephew of the old grocer, had attended the mosque school at the same time as Emineh. She left school at nine, he at eleven, but his interest in Emineh continued. She wove herself into everything he did, and these doings of his had a tendency to mimicry and clowning. The earliest symptom of his talent was seen when he persuaded his uncle to allow him to give a show in the garden behind the shop. He was then thirteen and living with his uncle, as his widowed mother had become the housekeeper of her bachelor brother. The old miser encouraged the lad, for the show would bring in a few extra coppers, and he did not like giving his nephew more than his scanty meals and a room.

Tewfik cut figures out of cardboard, tinted them with coloured chalks, and stretching a curtain in the back garden, and hanging a few coloured paper lanterns over the branches of the walnut tree, opened his show.

Tewfik did the necessary singing, besides manipulating the cardboard puppets and making them act. As he had no money to buy libretti, he improvised all the time; and

His improvisations consisted in reproducing scenes and figures from the Sinekli-Bakkal. His uncle was recognisable as the proverbial miser but Tevfik's favourite character was the *prima donna* of the show, a girl who walked and talked in the manner and with the voice of Emineh.

The imam had forbidden his daughter to go to shows of any sort, telling her they were the wiles of the Devil; but one day a soft-hearted woman neighbour managed to smuggle her in. Emineh's mother had died early, and the kindly neighbours did what they could to soften the rigidity of the girl's home life. When Emineh saw the delight of the children at recognising the original of the *prima donna*, she walked out of the garden. She would not speak to Tevfik again as long as she lived!

However Tevfik was most comely, with warm brown eyes, straight features, and long wiry limbs. He had little education and no fixed profession. Acting was not recognised as respectable. Yet he had gone on the stage at seventeen. With his figure and face, and his consummate gift of impersonating women, he was already in great demand. At the moment no one on the Turkish stage could act women's parts so well as he. For this reason he received the nickname of "Kiz Tevfik," that is "Tevfik, the girl."

He was not popular with men. He disgraced their sex. It was bad enough to be an actor, but an actor who wore in public the veils and shawls and other fripperies of women, a clown who painted his cheeks and eyelashes, and put false beauty-spots on his cheeks and chin, was even worse. Yet they all went to his performances, and none of them could keep a straight mouth. It was whispered that Selim Pasha, the pattern of all that was sober and solemn, could not prevent himself from laughing like the rest of them.

Before Tevfik was twenty his uncle and his mother died. From the former he inherited the shop, the house, and the

garden. The grocery was prosperous, the garden pleasant with its trellised vine, and the patch of land produced pumpkins, egg-plants, onions, and other vegetables.

Tewfik's heritage gave him the courage to propose to Emineh. He did it through an old woman, a neighbour. He promised to become a respectable grocer, to forsake his disreputable profession and his low companions; and Emineh, risking her father's wrath, eloped with him. They were helped by the many who found the Imam disagreeable and were glad to inflict on him this humiliating blow. When the couple came back from the distant quarter to which they had gone in order to get married, they settled in Tewfik's house.

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EMINEH, the prim maiden, who had attracted Tewfik with her pretty white skin, thin-lipped mouth, and bright little eyes, was different as a wife. As a lover Tewfik had been fascinating, as a husband he was most unsatisfactory. At first she could not tell what it was in him that so greatly irritated her, but she soon realised that he was taking life as all courtship and play. This perpetual playfulness she found extremely boring, yet the oftener she sent him into the shop to mind his business and earn money, the oftener he found excuses to run back to her and interrupt her work.

Tewfik was keeping his promise to be a grocer only in the letter; he would always be an actor in the spirit. He fooled with the barefooted urchins who swarmed round the shop, and treated them to red sugar. he made friends of his customers: he never resisted their demands for credit, and hated to ask for money at the end of the month. They confided their domestic troubles to him instead of paying their debts. As time went on, his actor cronies began to drop in. He was delighted. He fed them on credit. Some evenings they came in numbers, and when they did Tewfik would serve them with raki and salted nuts, and squatting on the benches or on the soap-boxes, they would discuss the world of the theatre. Laughter and good cheer reached Emineh's ears in the kitchen behind.

When the young wife saw that the stock of groceries was dwindling, and this without filling the tin box on the counter which was meant for a safe, she decided to take drastic measures. She had raised her innate tendency to nag

to the height of a fine art in her effort to make Tewfik realise how improvident was his treatment of his customers. But she was learning that no nagging, no matter to what heights it rose, could make Tewfik mend his ways. She had to take action, and action she took. With a promptness and firmness which allowed of no protest from Tewfik she suddenly took command of the shop. She sat at the counter, discouraged loafers, chased away poor children, and treated Tewfik to alternations of shrill scolding and scathing silence which presently reduced him to his proper place.

No amount of buffoonery on Tewfik's part could make him find favour in Emineh's eyes. When he would stand in the absurd posture of a paper figure against a screen and act a classic love-scene she would invariably raise her voice and call him a swine and a dog.

"I know you are incapable of making money by respectable means. Oh how I miss my father! He washed five times a day, and prayed five times a day. You put off washing as long as you can, and you never pray. He mixed with respectable people; he struggled hard to earn comfort and security for his family—you mix with scamps, and you throw away your money. He rose with the sun in the morning—you have to be kicked out of bed."

"Once upon a time there was an old Imam; though outwardly pious he was a humbug at heart——" began Tewfik.

"Are you alluding to my father, you pig?"

"Not at all," Tewfik assured her with his old-time sweetness. "This is a character which years ago I used to see a famous actor produce on the stage."

Without any visible effort Tewfik began to act the life of the saintly humbug. First the morning ablutions and prayers, the religious maxims daily quoted for the benefit of his family. Then he would be the Imam in his office, receiving the members of his congregation. Women would

come in to ask for burial permits, or to engage him for the rituals which Imams are expected to perform. Tewfik's lips sank in as if he were toothless, his young chin jutted out as if it were bearded, he screwed up his eyes, and in the greedy voice of the old man he bargained with a poor woman over the fee for the burial service. Then swiftly his face changed from the Imam's to that of the widow who had not the money to pay for her husband's burial service.

"Have you nothing to sell?" scolded Tewfik in the voice of the Imam.

"Nothing but a single brazier. If I sell it, my child will freeze this winter," cried Tewfik in the tearful voice of the widow.

"Sell it, oh woman! Better your child should freeze than that your husband should lie under the earth without Moslem burial!"

[illegible] stared at him, saying nothing. The scene was a travesty of her father. She must get even with him. She could make his life a misery by insulting him in public, by driving away his derelict friends and his poor customers. The rich clientele which she had acquired annoyed and humiliated him enough by their patronising airs. It was all she could do. There was a part of Tewfik which was beyond her reach.

After a month he began to absent himself from the shop. At first this was only during the daytime, but presently he stayed out during the evenings as well. When he failed to appear after evening prayers one day she locked the door. She could hear him blubbering outside, begging her to open, complaining to the yellow dog of her harsh treatment. It was a cold night, but she was determined to punish him. The brute was drunk. This was an additional offence to his staying out so late.

He remained at home in the evenings after that particular

episode. But there was a change in the man. He no longer courted her favour, no longer complained of bad treatment. He did her bidding mechanically. This passive resistance nonplussed Emineh. He watched her all the time, yet his mind seemed utterly detached from her. The man was escaping her. It worried her all the more, because she knew herself to be pregnant, and was troubled as to what manner of child this sort of father would have.

She woke suddenly one night to see him moving stealthily about. He went out of the room. A little later she heard the stairs creak. She waited for some time, then decided to go down. Noiselessly, and holding her breath, she went on until from the little corridor which opened into the shop she could see a light and hear voices.

"Can he be having his boon companions in at this time of the night?" she asked herself. Flattening her body behind the half-open door, she was able to peer through the crack. Queer-looking men sat on soap-boxes, chuckling to themselves. The oil lamp on the ceiling burnt brightly, and under it Tewfik was at his old trick of impersonating a woman. He wore a white veil over his head, and a jute sack as an apron, while the chequered table-cloth over his shoulders served as a shawl. She recognised the dress as puzzlingly familiar. Tewfik's wide face appeared to have narrowed, his full lips were compressed into a hard line, and he was talking in a high staccato voice. Why . . . he was imitating Emineh herself! The wretch had promised, one hand on the Holy Book, never to do it again. Choking with rage, she was yet unable to tear herself from the sight.

Now he was welcoming the customers, vaunting the freshness of the stale cheese, measuring out beans and rice, receiving money. He took it with that ecstatic expression which Emineh always had at the sight of coins. Now he was using the fan to drive away the flies and salaaming to

rich customers with religious deference. The polite and pleasant mask of her face slipped into a contortion, with the slight drawing-up of the right corner of her lip, as she turned to order her husband about.

As if this caricaturing of her was not humiliating enough, he began to sketch Emineh getting ready to go to bed. He applied the tweezers to the upper part of an eyebrow, lifting the brows to get it more quickly done; he extracted superfluous hairs from the upper lip, pushing it out with the help of the tongue; finally he imitated her finishing touch, a tiny false beauty-spot which she put on the edge of the left temple.

The men covered their mouths to stifle their amusement, and Emineh, watching, felt beyond herself with rage and mortification. Unable to endure any more, she pushed the door violently open, almost crushing the man who sat behind it, the dwarf of the local theatre. In a hoarse voice, her heart bursting with indignation, she began to shout:

"You dogs, you licker of rich men's bowls, you worse than jackals! . . ."

The company poured out into the night, and so great was their anxiety to escape that they trod on one another's toes and [illegible] their own long coats. Tewfik followed them.

The following morning she went to her father's house and begged to be taken in. It was not easy for the Imam to forgive. But not even he could leave a pregnant woman in the street, a woman, too, who declared that she would die rather than go back to her husband. The Imam knew the [illegible] determination of her character. He would take her in, but on only two conditions. She was never to go back to Tewfik, no matter how much he repented and begged her to return

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TEWFIK crawled back in the morning, his knees shaking at the necessity of facing Emineh. The shop-door was open, and Granny Zehra, the midwife of the Sinekli-Bakkal, was waiting for him in the shop. She had been sent by the Imam to tell Tewfik that he must divorce Emineh. Curiously enough, Tewfik heard of his wife's pregnancy from the old woman on that memorable morning. Emineh had consulted Granny Zehra some time before, and had postponed giving the news to Tewfik.

Emineh's absence that morning might come as a reprieve, but the possibility of a lasting separation was inconceivable to him. The old midwife, who was fond of Tewfik, promised to do her best to soften the Imam's daughter.

When a month had gone by, Tewfik realised that Emineh was not to be mollified by messages, and that she might indeed remain away for ever, divorce or no divorce. It was then that he began a new courtship of his wife. The fainter his hopes of winning her back, the greater his desire. Her tyranny and ceaseless nagging was forgotten in the perpetual aching of his heart. He haunted the Imam's house. He leaned against the door crying and begging in the most abject manner for pardon. He wandered about wringing his hands, and telling everyone he knew of his lost love. The women could talk of nothing else. He was like a lover in a story-book. The men felt ashamed. They spat over their shoulders asking the unseen powers to protect them from ever showing such ignominous and unmanly weakness.

The Imam called in the police. Tewfik, he protested, was a menace to public peace and decency. The law handled him

roughly, but the pain he felt was nothing to that given him by the sound of Emineh's voice behind the lattices. It encouraged the police, and showed a savage satisfaction in his humiliation.

"Strike him, once more, once more!" the shrill voice called. "It fattens my heart to see the clown beaten!"

Tewfik was dragged to the Karakol, and the sergeant swore that if he ever found the fellow again at the Imam's door he would break every bone in his body.

After this scene Tewfik closed the shop and disappeared from the Sinekli-Bakkal. Five months later he was the talk of the whole capital. He was acting again. He had added a new scene to the classical impersonation of women. It was called the *Kilibik*, that is, *The Hen-pecked*. It was a ruthless skit on his own life, and it took Istanbul by storm. He was becoming the most sought-after entertainer at feasts and ceremonies. No rich wedding or circumcision feast was complete without him. Even royal weddings, and the entertainments given to ambassadors by His Majesty, availed themselves of Tewfik. The rumour of his name and fame reached the Sinekli-Bakkal, and reduced Emineh to a state of panic. She wondered to what intimate degree he was using her as his subject in that cursed *Hen-pecked*.

Her worst suspicions were confirmed when the urchins called as she passed them on the street.

"How do you make your beauty-spot, Auntie Emineh?"

They knew, they must have been to Tewfik's show! She was so shaken and miserable by this blow that her daughter Rabia was born a little before her time.

The Imam sued for divorce and alimony. Tewfik had to appear at the religious court and face his father-in-law. It was a famous trial. The Imam made a harrowing speech. His sermons had been wont to make people's flesh creep at the vivid imagery of eternal torture, but this time he was

dealing with reality. He was exposing a man who had dragged into a public theatre the image of a chaste Moslem woman, unveiling the holy of holies of her private life. And the woman so shamelessly exposed was the wretch's own wife! Had the Moslem world ever seen the like of such iniquity? It had not. His eminence the Kadi looked dangerous. Those who owed to Tewfik's art many moments of delight looked indignant. They had never realised that his play was a faithful picture of his wife. That was a subject no Moslem, no Turk with any decency, could allude to in public. A shiver of religious horror swept the court, and Istanbul felt ashamed of its favourite. The Kadi sentenced him to pay a large sum to Emineh, and he was compelled to divorce her.

The general indignation which was felt at Tewfik's behaviour was reported to His Majesty, and of course in exaggerated terms. Tewfik had sinned against public decency. His Majesty ordered him into exile. Istanbul, city of short memory, forgot his sins, and the Sinekli-Bakkal spoke of him only when they saw Emineh walking in the street with Tewfik's baby girl in her arms.

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RABIA, Tewfik's daughter, was five. Like other girls belonging to her humble station of life, she had to do a certain amount of household work. She made coffee, washed dishes, peeled potatoes, and served her elders. She also poured water out of a copper jug over the Imam's hands and feet when that pious person was at his ablutions. There was one respect in which her life differed essentially from that of other children. The drastic "Thou shalt nots" decreed by the Imam made her life a unique experience in its bareness and rigidity. Tame and subdued as were the lives of other girls, they were allowed a certain amount of play. In the home into which Rabia was born no one ever played.

"Dolls are idolatrous attempts to make images; they are abominations in the sight of Allah!" preached the Imam to his granddaughter. "The very thought of play is a crime and revolt against the Almighty!" he thundered.

The Imam's theology was simple. There were two abodes in the next world. A road led to each, and men were free to choose which road they would take. The abode of Bliss was the domain of God. The road which led to it was one of perpetual gloom and contrition of heart. The abode of Perdition was the domain of the Devil. The road which led to it was one of pleasure and play. Rabia's father was a follower of the Evil One, therefore he had played all his life, thus treading the road to Hell. It behoved Rabia, the granddaughter of a pious Imam, to avoid that road.

Fatmeh was of one mind with her father. She watched with jealous care lest the child should be tempted during

her tender years by the lure of pleasure. The instinct for play which she might have inherited from Tewfik had to be ruthlessly exterminated.

But Tewfik's little daughter could not resist the temptation to play. She heard the children in the neighbouring gardens singing on their swings or playing with their dolls. Her heart ached with longing to have a doll of her own. When Emineh was out she made herself a rag doll, with streaming maize-straw for hair, two black beads for eyes, and a single red bead for a mouth. Although she hid it under a heavy cushion it did not escape Emineh's vigilance. She was marched into the Imam's presence with the doll in her hands.

"Who are you that you should make images?" cried the Imam, and his voice was tremulous with anger. He walked into the kitchen and threw the accursed thing into the smouldering wood fire under the cauldron in which the household linen was boiled—the day being a Tuesday, and therefore washing-day.

What followed this was still more terrible. The Imam took her to his room, and producing a cane, a relic left from the days when he had been a school teacher, he caned her with official gravity. Although her little body was black and blue, and her face swollen with tears, he made her kneel and repeat prayers of repentance in Arabic until her throat ached.

Rabia was not sent to the Mosque school at six like the other girls of her age. Her mother's bitter experience had been a warning to the Imam. He would teach her to read. He found her intelligence out of the ordinary. When he made her learn by heart the verses of the Koran which were parts of her daily prayers he had to admit that she had an astoundingly quick memory. Emineh reported that she had heard the girl sing popular songs which she could not have

heard more than twice. The girl had a lovely voice, and an extraordinarily musical ear.

"Why not train her as a Hafiz?" said the Imam, and his daughter was pleased with the idea. Who was so able at that sort of training as the Imam himself? How many young boys and girls had he not trained to be a Hafiz, that is to say, a Koran-chanter?

Early in the mornings and late in the afternoons Rabia went to the Imam's room, and kneeling on the hard boards she committed to memory long passages of the Koran under his guidance, and learned to chant them in the proper way. Thus she began her career as a Koran-chanter.

At first it was difficult to get by heart those long passages in a language not her own. Besides, the Imam frightened her by declaring that if she ever made a mistake she would be consigned to eternal fire. As time went on, the harmony of the Arabic verses intoned in the exact syncopated religious chant began to cast their spell on her. The Imam watched her swing her small body backwards and forwards, chanting in that lovely voice of hers, so low and clear for her age, but when he fancied he saw a gleam of joy in Rabia's honey-gold eyes he felt troubled. Was she getting pleasure out of it? His puritanism verged on sadism. He believed himself to be obeying a divine command in his endeavour to stamp out all human expression of joy. He stopped her, and described Heaven and Hell to her.

However difficult her lessons were, she was developing a great capacity for restraint. The Imam's constant preaching that to be gay was an abomination was schooling her in a fixed gravity. This outward solemnity and restraint was perhaps in some degree the result of a self-protective instinct, similar to that of birds and insects, which take on the colour of their surroundings to avert danger. Its effects showed on her young face. At nine she had already deep

furrows between her eyebrows, and lines of pain around the corners of her pink mouth.

She was eleven when she completed her study of the Koran. Official examiners proved her knowledge and ability to chant the Holy Book from end to end in an impeccably correct manner, and she was henceforth included in the body of Koran-chanters as its youngest member.

Rabia attracted public attention very soon after her official examination. This was partly because it was rumoured that she had passed it brilliantly, and partly because she chanted for a month at the Valideh mosque during that first Ramazan. Its *habitués* saw a fragile figure sitting in a corner of the vast temple, her fair face hazily framed in the folds of a white muslin head-veil, her thin hands motionless on her knees, while she swung her slim body to and fro, and her voice rang out hauntingly and yearningly. Those who heard her made inquiries, and presently discovered where she lived. After that she was constantly engaged by big houses to chant at religious ceremonies, private or public. Generous sums of money went to the Imam, and she herself derived a dreamlike glory and joy from the attention she received.

Among those who listened to her chanting at the Valideh mosque was the wife of Selim Pasha, the foremost figure in the patrician section of the Sinekli-Bakkal. Sabiha Hanim was generally liked for her charities, but also much discussed for her eccentricities. She had a special *entourage*, composed of entertainers whom she picked up and dropped with equal ease. She had also a large number of friends among both rich and poor who visited her often and freely; but the rest of the Sinekli-Bakkal paid only a yearly visit for the Bairam congratulations.

Emineh did not enjoy Sabiha Hanim's friendship. Beyond what good manners demanded, that lady had taken no notice of her. This, however, was not due to her unaccount-

le whims and fancies, as Emineh supposed. She had fol- wed Tewfik's career from his early boyhood with interest d amusement. As a young woman she would stop her riage to see him fooling in the street with the other boys. e had often spoken to him kindly and slipped a few bright as into his palm. She had heard later of his strange in- uation for Emineh and its sequel. It was about this time it she was seeking release from a monotonous life in the lliant comedies with which Tewfik delighted the city.

Tewfik's disgrace and exile pained the great lady. As all lts passed through the hands of Selim Pasha, who hap- ned to be the Minister of Zaptieh—that is to say the person ponsible for the policing and order of the Empire—she d her influence to get a pardon for the young actor. But Pasha was not the kind who allowed personal views to luence him with regard to the rights and the wrongs of a e. When Tewfik left Istanbul, it seemed to Sabiha Hanim it with him had gone the Turkish Theatre. The newly ated modern theatres, with their translated plays, which re acted in alien accents, and depicted alien lives, were artificial to have any attraction for her. For this she ually held Emineh responsible.

And Sabiha Hanim was growing old. Those around her ected her to adopt a prayerful and pious attitude. They ted at the necessity of turning her thoughts from this rld to the next. But what was that future world? Rather asty one she thought. To her it suggested creepy and wly insects. It smelt disagreeably of damp earth. When Imam preached of the tortures of Hell at the mosque sweated in an anguish of fear, and could not sleep at ghts. Not that the Heaven he preached found favour in eyes. It sounded incredibly dull. Yet without religion could not be at rest. This led her to search for a creed heresy which offered a more attractive hereafter. Old as

she was, her vitality was unquenchable, and she wished to live and above all to laugh as heartily as ever. In her quest for a congenial religion she began to frequent the Tekkes—that is the Orders—which were not looked on as orthodox.

The Order of the Dancing Dervishes attracted her most. It was devoid of any gruesome theology. The religious dances, the subtle humour of the old Sheikhs regarding life, both of the present and the hereafter, were alluring. It looked as if in the Heaven promised by that Order there might be some laughter. She joined the Order, and thus got Vehbi Effendi, a saintly Dervish and a great musician, to become the music-teacher for the young people of the Konak.

When she first saw Rabia in her capacity of a newly risen star among the chanters she could not believe her eyes. Was this wonderful artist the same timid, colourless little girl who used to accompany Emineh at Bairams, and kiss the hem of her garment? She sat up, eyeing the girl critically. Undoubtedly the forlorn little creature had a divine gift. How could she bear to live in the atmosphere of the Imam's house? No wonder the voice of the poor mite had a strange pathos, a stirring and elusive sadness!

"Pasha," she said, after several visits to the Valideh mosque, "I want the Imam's granddaughter to come and chant to me in the evenings. Arrange it so that she can come without the mother."

This was easy to arrange. The Imam was only too glad of the new engagement. The Pasha paid liberally. A servant would call for Rabia and bring her back home on the evenings when Sabiha Hanim asked for the girl.

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RABIA sighed with relief as she made her way from the small unlighted street to the stately avenue in which was Selim Pasha's house. The manservant held a lantern in his hand, lighting her way, and she followed demurely. To her who had seen it only by day, the night view of the avenue was a revelation. Immense wooden mansions stood in the midst of beautiful shady gardens, protected by high walls. They lined the sides of the avenue, and on each gate burnt an enormous lantern.

Stepping into the garden path, Rabia felt the excitement of the unknown. She sniffed at the balmy smell of the acacias and honeysuckle, and listened to the sound of several fountains. She felt happy But it was when she entered the Konak itself, and her little feet sank into the crimson carpets that covered the double staircases carved in oak, that she had the sensation of having left her own surroundings behind her for good. Her heart was beating eagerly as she tried to visualise the lady who had summoned her During the Bairam visits that lady had been of a disconcerting dignity and poise. She had dismissed them with gracious salutations, but she had never been cordial. Rabia walked gravely enchanted with the crystal chandeliers that hung from the ceilings. Hundreds of candles, white soft flames bathing the halls with light. . . . From behind a closed door she heard a woman's voice murmuring a gypsy song, to the silvery tinkle of castanets and the rhythmic thud of dancing feet She had understood that her visit to the house was in some way connected with religion, but the Konak had no such air.

The fat Kahia Kadin, the housekeeper, whom Rabia had so far hardly noticed, led her into Sabiha Hanim's private room. The lady was reclining on a divan, propped up by innumerable cushions, her knees covered with a silky, fluffy blanket. At close quarters she was by no means forbidding. The creases of her thick, sagging throat, the wrinkles of her fat cheeks, and the almost insolent pride of the head were relieved by the eyes, piercing and kindly, full of intelligence and understanding.

Rabia bowed solemnly, and stooped for the hem of the lady's garment, in order that she might kiss it, as convention demanded. But Sabiha Hanim put out her hand and held it to the girl's mouth, just as any ordinary woman of the Sinekli-Bakkal would have done. It was a singularly beautiful hand, white and unwrinkled, and on the last three fingers were three large rings. It was a hand which Rabia's mother would have described disdainfully as one which in all its life had dipped itself neither in hot water nor in cold.

"What is your name, dear?"

"Your female slave Rabia," answered Rabia in the tone her mother had instructed her to use.

The quizzical smile of the lady broadened into a grin.

"Come, come, your name is simply Rabia Abla."

How did she know? Abla, which meant "big sister," was the title, half affectionate, half mockingly respectful, by which those outside her home usually addressed Rabia. Her gravity and extreme youthfulness provoked it. The old attendants of the mosques where she chanted, the tradesmen at the door with whom she bargained, with a thorough knowledge of the prices of fruit and vegetables, always called her "big sister." Even the wild boys of the street, who teased other little girls and pulled their hair, greeted her with a half-amused and friendly "Good morning, Rabia Abla." She thought of these things before sitting down, not forgetting

to lift her black silk dress to protect it from creases.

"How absurd to make a child dress in black! Dear me, the stuff is so hard too!"

"It was my mother's old gown," explained Rabia. Her dresses were made out of the cast-off clothes of her mother and even of her grandfather. They were always of sombre colours, always faded by wear and tear, always darned. Did not the Imam strive to overcome vanity? Had not the Prophet patched and darned his garments, and spent his money on clothing the fatherless? Not that the Imam ever dressed the fatherless, but he insisted that his patches and darns should be well in evidence. Rabia tried to explain the virtue of sobriety of dress and patched garments.

"Nonsense," Sabiha Hanim grunted. "You should wear the brightest colours and the newest dresses whenever you can get them!"

The brilliant eyes in the dilapidated old face scrutinised Rabia, comparing her with the children of her own class. They were noisy and self-confident, the boys full of life, the girls impudent in manner, especially those who had foreign governesses. The strange humility, the quietness of Rabia made one feel that something must be lacking in her life, something which every youngster should have.

"When shall I chant for you, Effendim?" Rabia was there for that purpose after all.

"To-night we will get acquainted, my child." Then, with sudden curiosity in her voice, she asked: "Don't you ever sing, Rabia?"

"Singing is a sin. Those who sing in this world will have scorpions gnawing at their throats in the next. . . ."

For every improper act in life the Imam had composed a pompous theological punishment, and had made Rabia commit it to memory. She was so trained that whenever she was asked a question concerning such matters she auto-

matically recited the pious comment.

Sabiha Hanim laughed, and Rabia looked down at the design of the carpet. It was inconceivable that any one should treat the sayings of the Imam so lightly. The disconcerting voice broke the silence with another tabooed subject.

"Do they ever speak of your father at home?"

Rabia gulped, and nearly lost the rehearsed artificiality of her manner and voice. She was able, however, to produce the theological formula which she had been told to repeat whenever respectable people questioned her about her father.

"My father is a sinful person; when he dies he will go straight to Hell."

"A jolly time the inhabitants of Hell will have with Tewfik to entertain them!" Sabiha Hanim laughed heartily, but her mood changed into a sad one as she thought of the poor young comedian in exile . . . a man so full of joy in life, and his daughter so repressed—taught to consider existence a perpetual misery!

Meanwhile Rabia wondered at the change in her hostess. The mocking eyes were looking far away into something which clouded them with tears. The girl had a feeling that this suddenly mellowed and wistful mood was in some way connected with her father. She startled Sabiha Hanim by asking, in a voice that was hoarse with emotion, but nevertheless a real voice, the natural voice of a child who was appealing to her:

"Did you know my father, Effendim?"

"Surely, from the time he was so high, not even as tall as you are. I went to the theatres whenever he acted. My poor unfortunate Tevfik, it was an evil day when he took a fancy to that humbug mother of yours!"

Rabia was not affected by the disparaging tone with which Sabiha Hanim mentioned her mother. Her mind was else-

where. She asked another question, this time in a suppressed and agonised whisper:

"Will my father really burn in Hell?"

"Who knows the Will of Allah?" A great gentleness had crept into the old woman's voice, and unaware of the eyes which gazed at her with such unchildlike intensity she continued musingly: "The Devil is perfectly clear as to what he wants his followers to do."

The Koran-chanter looked immeasurably miserable. This old woman, who had appeared so hopeful, was now uttering vague and incomprehensible words. Sabiha Hanim's mood, however, changed once more. She realised the depressing effect of her last sentence, and she hated to be depressed. Turning to the child, she gave her an animated description of Tewfik as he charmed his audiences at the Sweet Waters. The old lady was enjoying her reminiscences greatly when the Kahia Kadin entered. At once she dropped the subject of Tewfik's clowning and began to question her housekeeper.

Every evening, at this hour, the housekeeper came to Sabiha Hanim with a report of the day's events. Since the lady herself was obliged to spend most of the day on her divan she depended on the Kahia Kadin's report of what happened in the house. Being curious, and of a dominating nature, she must know every detail, and must rule every human being under her roof. She began by inquiring about her husband, to whom she alluded in private as "the bearded one."

"He is carpentering, making corner brackets in his room. I heard the noise of the saw from the hall."

"Is there no dancing going on?" Sabiha Hanim's eyes were fixed on the housekeeper's face.

"I believe there was something of the sort in Durnev Hanim's room. Canary is there, and she is supposed to be

rehearsing. . . . No one can tell what mischief they are up to."

The Kahia Kadin lifted her eyes to the ceiling in the attitude of one who asks Heaven to forgive the unmentionable sins committed by such creatures. But the lady had turned from thoughts of them. She made the sign of a moustache. That meant her son.

"His two friends are with him. They are at the seventh cup of coffee. Nazikter had iced the sherbets, but he ordered the girl not to disturb him until he called her."

"Did you listen?"

"I did; I put my ear to the door, but I could not understand their talk."

"Women perhaps?"

"No."

"Then some Young Turkish business perhaps."

"Heaven forbid! The young Bey is wiser than that. He knows that our necks are thinner than hair before the sharpness of His Majesty's sword."

6

A MINISTER OF PUBLIC SECURITY under a tyrant—especially such a tyrant as Abdul Hamid II—had a difficult and delicate job. He also enjoyed an unlimited sense of power of a sinister kind. No one had occupied the post for a longer period than Selim Pasha: none had retained His Majesty's personal confidence in such a degree. The reason was to found in Selim Pasha's belief in the divine rights of his Royal Master, and his Royal Master was a connoisseur of men. The Sultan knew that his Minister of Public Security would be ruthless and uncompromising towards every Young Turk, even if the culprit were the Pasha's own only son. Yet the Pasha was not unaware of his son's sympathy for the Young Turkish cause. Fortunately he did not take the young man seriously. He classified him as one of the Westernised young idiots who talked a lot but who were incapable of any decision or coherent action. Not so Sabiha Hanim. Deep down in her mind was a perpetual fear lest her son should become involved in some political indiscretion. And the mildest political offence could be punished by perpetual exile. However, her essentially cheerful disposition thrust aside all morbid thoughts. Life in the Konak followed a certain routine, and offered to all a great deal of pleasure—thanks to her intelligent guidance.

With regard to her husband, Sabiha Hanim had always felt safe. The Pasha led a sober and irreproachable private life. Yet many years ago there had been a skeleton in the cupboard, and it was now haunting her mind. It was this. Though Selim Pasha was attached to his wife, he had never

been satisfied with the son she had given him. The boy had the eyes of a she-gazelle; moreover, he lisped, and devoted a great deal of his time to books and music. He was harmless enough in a way, but the boy's appearance was incongruous in the only son of a sturdy and manly father. So thought Selim Pasha, and he longed to have another son, one who would resemble him, and have ideas after those of his own heart. Years went by, and his wife gave him no other son. This had led him to take a second wife, the daughter of a merchant. He had chosen her with the help of his steward's wife, hoping that she was more fit to give him the kind of son upon whom he had set his heart. He took a house for her in a remote part of Istanbul, and believed that Sabiha Hanim knew nothing of the matter. The new wife bore him a sickly daughter, and died at the birth of a second and stillborn girl-child.

Of late the long-forgotten episode had troubled her peace of mind. It was all the fault of her daughter-in-law. She was a former slave. Sabiha Hanim had chosen Durnev for her intelligence and beauty, trained and educated her with care, and had then persuaded her son to marry her. The old woman believed that the girl would keep out of her way. But since she had been confined to her room so much of the time, her young daughter-in-law was trying to rule the house. She must be put in her place. Sabiha Hanim made a wicked plan. She bought another beautiful Circassian girl, called Canary, who was being trained as a dancer.

"I will present the girl to my lady Rose-Mouth, the second wife of His Majesty," she declared. But in reality she meant to direct her son's attention to the beautiful dancer, render her daughter-in-law jealous, and thus reduce her to her old obedience.

Durnev Hanim, the daughter-in-law, had, however, acted unexpectedly. She had adopted the young slave as a bosom

friend, and had undertaken to supervise her training. Every evening there was dancing and music in Durnev's room, and Selim Pasha was often invited. All this was a little ominous. Would the fair slave revive the Pasha's old desire for a son?

"It is not becoming for a man of your age and position to attend dances," said Sabiha Hanim to her husband.

"Since you are going to present Canary to the Palace I have to study the girl carefully," answered the Pasha gravely. "I am responsible for His Majesty's safety."

As Sabiha Hanim discussed these matters with her housekeeper on Rabia's first evening the child began to nod drowsily. The old woman had forgotten her presence.

"It is getting late; shall we send her home?" The housekeeper pointed to Rabia.

Sabiha Hanim patted the young Koran-chanter on the shoulder. "Saturday is Kandil, the anniversary of our Prophet's birth. I am going to have a gathering here in honour of the occasion, and you shall chant for the souls of the dead. Tell your mother that she can attend after the night prayers."

7

THE anniversary of the Prophet's birth had to be taken very seriously. Sabiha Hanim's celebrations were in keeping with her reputation for charity and her exalted position in life. At the principal street-corners and the mosque yards of the Sinekli-Bakkal, coloured sweets in corner-shaped paper bags and warm fancy bread were distributed to the children of the poor. Behind large tubs, filled with water from famous springs, men offered a drink to the passers-by calling out: "For the souls of the dead of Selim Pasha's house!" For the Koran-chanting ceremony of the evening Rabia was engaged, and the whole household would attend.

Rabia arrived at the time of the sunset call for prayers. The chandeliers were being lighted. Sabiha Hanim, dressed in silks, wearing her gala jewels, and sitting in an arm-chair, made Rabia think of the Bairam days.

A thin, insignificant girl of fifteen came in first and kissed Sabiha Hanim's hand. This was her stepdaughter Mihri, the only one of the family of whom the housekeeper had omitted to speak in her evening reports. Some said that the lady was too high-minded to spy on her stepdaughter; others declared that the girl was too down-trodden to need surveillance. Sabiha Hanim kissed the girl's cheeks, and dismissed her with the conventional "Many happy returns!"

Kahia Kadin then led in the servants and slaves of the Harem. Rabia at once noted that the lady graciously offered her hand for them to kiss, and that she repeated the Kandil congratulations to each. They passed before her, each in turn, and left the room; but one remained behind. Rabia stared

at her, fascinated. She was a girl with broad shoulders, narrow, boyish hips, and a brilliant, satiny skin Her eyes were blue. Her rose-coloured gown was simply made, and had a silver belt; her fair hair hung down her back in a long braid ending in a large ribbon bow, as though she had been a very young girl. Rabia's eyes were fastened on the girl's face, and she marvelled over the haughty lines of the arched eyebrows, one of which was higher than the other. This trick of the lifted eyebrow was one in which, for some unaccountable reason, all Circassian beauties indulged. But this Rabia did not know. The girl was Canary!

"Where is Durnev Hanim?" asked Sabiha Hanim.

"She is coming, Effendim," the girl answered.

And Durnev Hanim did come in, a *petite* person with large innocent brown eyes and very black eyebrows, which had been carefully pencilled and brushed, so that they might have the outlines of two new moons Her make-up was elaborate. Rouge and crayon, and the fastidious use of the tweezers, had given her face a well-groomed and satiny sheen. The emerald necklace, the rings and bracelets, and above all the emerald ear-rings, hanging on chains and reaching her shoulders, were dazzling in their brilliance. The set was famous, and she had taken pains to match her dress with her jewels. The bustle, the thousand frills, and the long train were all of the same shade. With her high-heeled satin shoes she gave soft, vicious kicks to her train, making it move like an angry snake or undulate like a young tiger, according to the changes of her mood. In spite of her bright holiday dress she was behaving as though unaware of the holiday. She complimented her mother-in-law on her good health, and then stood under the chandelier, occupied with her own thoughts.

Whatever Durnev Hanim's thoughts may have been, the balancing of her body on her hips and the pleased expression

of her face as she listened to the silky swish of her long train annoyed her mother-in-law. The old woman wondered whether Durnev was trying to irritate her, or whether her gestures were merely foolish; those of an upstart, a former slave.

"I suppose you want to ask me something. . . ."

"How did you know?" There was a faint sarcasm in the young woman's archness. "It is about Canary. Could you invite the royal lady next week?"

"Certainly."

"Then you can perhaps come to the rehearsal to-night. All the musicians will be there, and Pasha father is coming."

The mother-in-law was genuinely shocked. Her make-up acquired a purplish tinge from the blush of anger beneath it as she exclaimed:

"To-night?"

"Why not?"

"You speak as if you had been brought up among infidels. It is Kandil to-night. Didn't you know that? Didn't you know that the girl Koran-chanter was to chant to my guests?"

"What Koran-chanter?" She cast a contemptuous glance at the humble figure on the floor at her mother-in-law's feet. "Well, my rooms are in the other wing; we can have the rehearsal all the same."

Sabiha Hanim was doing her best to look unruffled. She had fasted that day, and had said extra prayers. She had promised Allah to be especially indulgent with Durnev. But human endurance had a limit, and hers was reached.

"Why this fuss about the squeak of a girl?" continued the younger woman, provokingly. "If it were some well-known man chanter, chanting behind a screen, I might have postponed the rehearsal."

"It does not matter who chants the Koran. It all goes to

appease the souls of the dead."

Durney shrugged her pretty shoulders. She was not greatly concerned with the appeasing of dead souls.

"In your native village in the Caucusus they would not know how to celebrate Kandil nights; therefore your ancestors need more appeasing than mine!"

"That was a masterly stroke," Sabiha Hanim told herself. The allusion had startled the train of the green robe into the furious swish-swish of an enraged cobra's tail. The infantile innocence of the large brown eyes was gone; petulance was written all over the face

At this critical moment the housekeeper's head appeared at the door, and she announced the Pasha. Although hostilities were at once suspended, the air of the room remained electric.

It was a tall, broad man, dressed in the Palace uniform, who entered the room. He appeared to be many years younger than his wife; his black beard and long, drooping moustaches showed but insignificant traces of silver, and the deep lines between the formidable, bushy eyebrows denoted vigour and virility rather than age. The eyes were dark grey, and the nose very long Classically regular at the root, it swept into a hawk like curve above the nostrils A face which could look terrible, yet which could also be very pleasant. He was in a pleasant mood to-night.

His wife had risen at his entrance and he saluted her ceremonially as they exchanged greetings. Her attempts to draw his attention to the little figure standing beside her failed. he had eyes only for his daughter-in-law. And his daughter-in-law was pouting like a spoilt child, while her eyes had once more resumed their infantile innocence.

"What is troubling you, my pretty?" he asked affectionately.

"She wants to have dancing and music on such a holy night as this."

8

ON the circular divan stretching along the four walls of the big reception-room an audience of white-veiled ladies sat in rows, their feet tucked under their bodies, their eyes devoutly bent on their knees, their fingers telling their rosaries. Their lips moved, repeating divine attributes without emitting any sound, and as they swung gently in tune to Rabia's chanting they were like an assembly of Eastern nuns at their prayers.

Rabia's rich contralto rang far beyond the room. She had the Arab diction, that slow, sustained legato, chaining one syllable to another in perfect measure, no matter how long each note had to be held. It drew the inhabitants of the Konak in a crowd to the corridor; even the Pasha himself came. Hilmi, his son, had come down too; leaning against the balustrade, he listened to the child.

When the guests and the chanter had gone, Sabiha Hanim lay on her divan, exhausted, while a slave-girl massaged her knees. Before long her husband appeared in his white nightcap and Damascene dressing-gown.

"You were right, Hanim. The child is a marvel."

"So you heard her from Durnev's apartment?"

"I came to the door to hear her before going to the dancing, but I remained there to the end."

Selim Pasha smiled as at a pleasing vision. The servants had opened the door to bring sherbets, and he had seen the child chanter, sitting before the low table between two flickering candles. What strange, golden eyes she had! The long thin face, which had appeared so insignificant a few hours before, had seemed in that setting like an old Persian

paint. Its rosy tints were pale, its outlines austere.

"I have decided to have her voice trained by a good master," he announced.

"What will the Imam say?"

"It will make her a better chanter—more money for the miser." He scratched his beard thoughtfully. "How marvellously she would render some of the old classic songs!"

"The Imam would think it a sinful practice!" She chuckled to herself, remembering Rabia's solemn repetition of the Imam's verdict on singing.

"Most of those songs were composed by great sultans and canonised saints, who are now all dwellers in Paradise. What can a paltry Imam have to say against them?"

A young man entered the room. It was his son Hilmi. He was the usual type of young Bey; a small brown moustache, a delicate face, and faultless grooming. He escaped insipidity by the expression of his mouth and eyes. Something in that clean-cut mouth and in the eyes gave him the air of a man of ideas, an expression in marked contrast to that of most of his class. Yet he was out of place as Selim Pasha's son; he lacked the electric energy, the almost brutal vitality of the father. The difference in looks and temperament nurtured a mutual contempt and irritation. This was evident even to those who saw them together for the first time.

Hilmi bowed stiffly to the older man, evidently displeased to find him there, but leaning over his mother he kissed her hands, one at a time, with his usual tender courtesy.

"That Koran-chanter of yours is a great discovery," he said, lisping a little more than he usually did. He was, indeed, a little excited.

"Your father also thinks so," she said, extremely pleased. A subject on which the two agreed was so rare.

"What a contralto, what a treasure of a voice!" he con-

tinued. "But she must be cured of that constant legato, that whining, monotonous Arab diction."

Selim Pasha knitted his bushy brows. He had not the slightest idea as to what legato or contralto might mean, but he liked the girl's style. He would prefer to have her mannerisms emphasised rather than corrected. With hidden irony in his voice he asked:

"How would you do that, sir?"

"I should engage Peregrini as her music master. Two years under his tutelage would improve her voice so greatly . . . she would be good enough for a European stage."

"What an ass!" thought Selim Pasha. He knew Peregrini gave music lessons to members of Turkish families, including his own son, who was one of those who believed that the culture and learning, and even the music of Europe, were superior to those of Turkey. As Peregrini taught in the Palace also, the Pasha had him watched by the secret police. But Peregrini was politically harmless. He was a Catholic monk who had abandoned his Order. Like all orthodox persons, Selim Pasha disliked people who abandoned the faith in which they had been reared. If the fellow had embraced Islam it might have redeemed him in the Pasha's eyes. As to what Peregrini could teach, Selim Pasha had a very definite idea.

"Are the ladies who grace the European stage all pupils of Peregrini?"

"It isn't that . . . well . . . you naturally wouldn't know the kind of music the European artists sing."

Though Hilmi spoke seriously, his tone was a little patronising.

"Don't I, though?" The bushy eyebrows were once more raised. "Doesn't my position as the Minister of Public Security oblige me to attend all the performances European artists give in the city?"

"Don't you think it good music, sir?"

"Good music? If there were no Capitulations I would give orders to have those foreign singers silenced, and drive away the gaping fools who compose their audience. Do you call the studied screech of those promiscuous, half-naked, spectacular women good music? They do nothing but vie with each other to reach the topmost note in the scale. Their men are no better. They bellow like bulls. Good music indeed . . . nothing but a concert of yells and howls in a lunatic asylum!"

"You could not be expected to understand, sir," Hilmi remarked exasperatingly.

"Well, you tell me that European music and literature is based on life. Who ever saw such bustle and hustle, such unnecessary fuss made over the simple acts of life? Can you imagine any sane human being making love or dying in that spectacular manner? Fancy hiring that wizened old devil with the Satanic beard to teach a little Turkish girl such tricks! No, I shall ask Vehbi Effendi to train the Imam's granddaughter."

There was finality in the last sentence of the Pasha's satirical tirade. Yet Hilmi could not help saying: "There is both life and science in Western music. As to ours . . . poof! . . "

"What is wrong with ours?"

"I should say that the contentment of the masses, the idle luxury of the rich, are both due to the sleepy, moaning, insinuating melodies of the East. The rottenness of our social structure, the degradation of our women . . ."

"Leave our women out of it!" interrupted his father sternly. "They are infinitely better behaved than the European women! I see nothing but rapaciousness, a gross materialism, hypocrisy, and lack of reserve in Europeans, men and women."

Why had he been driven to argue with Hilmi? It pained his wife. After all, the boy was only an anaemic creature, absurd and affected, hardly normal.

"You shouldn't try to undermine the civilisation of an Islamic nation," he said to his son, by way of ending the discussion.

"Islamic civilisation?" Hilmi sneered, and quoted Zia Pasha: " 'I have walked through infidel domains, and beheld palaces and castles; I have wandered through Moslem realms and seen nothing but ruins.' "

Selim Pasha stood up, fingering his rosaries. The boy was a mere ape, led by any wind that blew from infidel quarters. "You and your beastly poet should know that civilisation is not palaces and castles!"

Hilmi looked after the retreating figure in the Damascene dressing-gown with fury in his soft brown eyes.

"You should not quote Zia Pasha; that is forbidden literature. He is lenient with you; remember how he exiles those who read that sort of seditious stuff. He is a great man."

"Great man? I wish he were poor and insignificant; anything but the reactionary tyrant he is, doing the bloody job of a bloody Sultan!"

"Although a graduate of Galata-Serai, Hilmi is nothing but a minor official in the Finance Department. His salary is not enough to tip his servants. He certainly could not dress on it. Why does he take his father's money if he does not approve of him?" said Sabiha Hanim to herself; but she held her peace, for she did not want to hurt her son.

"She has luxurious tastes; she insists on supporting a horde of parasitic entertainers. She has beautiful jewels and expensive carriages. It is her love of display and her senseless waste that creates such tyrants as my father," he argued to

himself. But he too held his peace, for he loved her dearly, above every other human being.

"There is something essentially wrong with the women of our country," he murmured softly after a time.

The wrinkles around her eyes deepened with laughter. "What is wrong with women, my dear?" she asked sweetly.

"Everything. They are being used for nothing but pleasure and the propagation of the race—they are all slaves, although the chains they wear are sometimes golden."

"Who should propagate the race, Hilmi? Do your European men make their own babies? It must be either their wives or their mistresses. When did you hear of cocks hatching eggs?"

He brushed aside her levity, continuing, with disconcerting earnestness, in his lisping voice, till she wanted to cry, she wanted to laugh, for the eternal seriousness of her son touched her strangely.

"One half of the race absorbed in administering to the beast in the other half! It does not matter who breeds the offspring. But who brings them up? The gilded creatures who do nothing but flaunt their sex, or miserable drudges. Not a single one of either kind is interested in ideas!"

"You had better go and rest. Durnev will be out of temper."

"Let her be," he exploded. "I am sick of my rooms. I can't go there without finding some sort of party. Oh, how I hate the sight of them shaking their confounded bellies!"

He looked at his mother with sad reproach. "I must submit because my mother has married me to a silly, empty-headed girl. Now she wants to burden me with another sex-machine. See here, mother, the sight of sex exhibition sickens me beyond description. You had better send that fair Circassian of yours to the Palace as quickly as you can."

"What would happen if I did not?"

"No danger for me, but Durnev will throw her into my father's arms."

"Very well." She was completely sobered. She asked her son to leave her. He had touched a sore spot. She had meant to postpone the sending of Canary to the Palace until Durnev capitulated, but her departure had now become a matter of necessity, a grim and urgent necessity.

9

SELIM PASHA decided to speak about Rabia's musical training to the Imam after the Selamlik—the Friday ceremony of His Majesty's going to the mosque. For the ceremony had complications of which the man in the street never dreamed. Those who went to see the show only saw the glitter: those behind the scenes knew how critical the situation was at times Selim Pasha's part in the arrangements was unpleasantly important. He had to see that none of His Majesty's loving subjects put a bullet through the Shadow of Allah on earth. The task was rendered more harassing than it need have been because of the horde of spies (who were seeking to justify their salary), and some private citizens (who were hoping to add to their incomes), who every week reported several plots to the Sultan. Selim Pasha had to investigate them all, and he breathed freely after he had seen the Sultan's carriage pass the portals of the private palace. Later he would be received by His Majesty with a few words of acknowledgement, and the gift of a red purse filled with gold. The size of the purse depended on the royal whim.

After such an ordeal the Pasha would come home rather exhausted. But he never refused to receive those who came to pay him their weekly respects. On this particular Friday he was in a good humour, and asked the Imam to remain after the others had left.

"I am well pleased with the pious and appropriate way in which you have educated your daughter," he began.

"Your humble servant has had much experience in train-

ing Koran-chanters," the Imam answered, smiling and well pleased with himself.

"A classical education would increase her value as a Koran-chanter. A number of instructors come here daily. Your granddaughter could profit by them."

The Imam coughed but said nothing.

"It means that apart from the evenings when she attends my lady she must come regularly in the afternoons for her lessons."

"Far be it from me to oppose your Excellency's wishes, but . . ."

"But what?"

"The child says her prayers five times a day, as every Moslem should. I am afraid the practice is not kept up by the young generation who are not carefully watched."

"Mine is a God-fearing house."

"Surely . . . I didn't mean that. . . . However, there is another matter. I have brought up the child to hate vanity and worldly show, to dress in the fashion of our forefathers. Nowadays . . ."

"Sobriety is laudable; we will not attempt to change her style of dressing," said the Pasha, slightly amused.

"The child is occasionally engaged to chant at different houses. Alas, my household budget depends very largely on her fees!"

"I shall see that you lose nothing by the child's education," said the Pasha, rising and ending the interview.

The Imam retired quivering with joy. The girl was a real hen with golden eggs! Why, at twenty the Imam himself had not been able to earn the half of what the child was earning at eleven

Rabia's home life was made more tolerable after this. It was true that she worked very hard in the mornings at home, and her mother continued to nag her. But there were no

more lessons with the Imam. From noon until the time when she returned home late in the evening Rabia was happy. Further, the Imam had begun to treat her as a person of importance in the house.

"Remember that she has brought prosperity to the house, Emineh. Don't use her so hardly," he would say to his daughter.

10

RABIA'S education began from the moment she entered the Konak. To be near Sabiha Hanim was to be thrown into a stream of life. Life enveloped Rabia, assailed her eyes, got into her nostrils and throat; she smelt it and tasted it.

She fetched and carried for the old lady, and became a kind of messenger, constantly delivering her orders to the other members of the household. Though the orders were precise and lucid, her low voice, winsome face, and friendly eyes softened the sting of these repeated commands. She was unobtrusive and discreet; she never repeated the outbursts of temper, the impudent remarks of the slaves concerning their lady. Everyone spoke to her confidentially, and even Durnev, who had been so ironical about her chanting on the night of Kandil, treated her kindly.

Whenever the official Gazette published a list of promotions Sabiha Hanim kept Rabia trotting to the Pasha's room to discover the why and wherefore of these favours. She would find him in his Damascene gown and white cap, carving back-scratchers and humming classic songs with the serenity of a clear conscience and a gay heart. The more he bastinadoed and exiled Young Turks, the more satisfied he felt. His explanations of these promotions were cynical to a degree. He would chuckle, his grey eyes twinkling, his long nose acquiring a humorous twist. Rabia came to the conclusion that the honours and titles in the promotion lists were invariably rewards for some special piece of villainy.

One day he winked at Rabia as he said:

"You must learn to sing 'Oh fair delight!' as soon as you can."

"That is the song Canary Hanim sings."

"You little rogue . . ." Rabia could not understand why he found her answer so amusing. "Canary will be in a golden cage next week; she cannot sing it in our Konak for long."

"Really, Effendim?" She was distressed, for she liked Canary, and did not understand what the Pasha predicted for her.

"Don't look distressed; it is not really a cage. I mean that she is going to the Palace to be a great lady."

From that day onwards the Palace, to Rabia's mind, appeared to be a huge golden cage, in which fair-haired women leaned against golden bars and sang "Oh fair delight!'

One evening a little later, when Rabia ran into the Pasha's room with a message from Sabiha Hanim, she found Canary there. The Pasha was sitting on a chair, smoking, his face sad and preoccupied. Facing him, Canary knelt on a floor cushion, playing the *ut* and singing a song which in later years became a favourite with Rabia. The Circassian sang in low tones, almost in a whisper, and the heaviness of heart that her song expressed affected Rabia.

"To whom, oh heart, shall I complain of thee?' wailed the voice and the strings, dragging out the notes in an interminable twangy moan.

The Pasha saw Rabia standing at the door, uncertain whether or not she should enter.

"What is it that our lady wants?" he asked.

She told her errand, but his thoughts seemed far away.

"I will explain to-night in person."

As the girl turned to go, he called her back. Canary was already indicating a place beside her.

"I shan't be here next week, Rabia," she said, her head bowed down with unaccountable humility. "We shan't be dining together any more." Tears began to run down her cheeks, and she added, in a hardly audible voice: "I will get you invited to the Palace."

The Pasha followed Rabia to the hall when she left the room.

"Don't tell Hanim Effendi that Canary was crying; in fact, you had better not mention that she was here."

The hint was unnecessary; she would not have mentioned it in any case.

Three days after this she found the Konak in a state of great excitement. Every chandelier blazed, every inmate was dressed in silk and trailing a long train; the atmosphere was feverish and charged with the swish-swish of silk. Canary was going to take her flight that night.

It was a gala evening. The Sultan's second wife, the future owner of the golden-haired Circassian, was gracing the Konak with her presence. There would be music, and Canary was to dance before leaving Selim Pasha's establishment for the Palace with her new mistress.

The royal lady was seated on a gilt chair on a dais in the reception hall. The tiara of brilliants on her fair hair and the necklace of single diamonds round her neck scintillated, catching the light from the two tall candles behind her. A bodyguard of elderly women sat rigidly on chairs round the dais, and the younger ones stood or walked about the corridors. All wore long robes and carried trains thrown negligently over their left arms. They also wore tiny head-dresses made of flimsy, gauzy stuff and perilously perched over one ear. They spoke, in Circassian accents, a curious Turkish which sounded like the warbling of birds. They flashed a strange radiance about them, and were very much alike in their blonde beauty; they were, indeed, older or

younger versions of Canary. They too raised one eyebrow in the same manner—costly and precious dolls, created *en série* by the same artist.

The wives of Cabinet Ministers were seated on the divan, waving their enormous ostrich-feather fans rather nervously. The musicians behind the white curtain lingered a little over their opening piece. When, however, they struck up a lively tune, Canary floated into the room. She wore a purple-ruby fancy dress, with enormous trousers, embroidered in quaint designs with gold and silver sequins, and flimsy sleeves, flapping like wings over her long, snowy arms. Only the arms and the hands, with golden castenets attached to the tapering fingers, lived and moved. The youthful body squeezed into the tight, sleeveless bodice remained strangely erect, strangely aloof. The life of the dance was in the arms: rippling, trembling, whirling. . . The straight, sunny hair lay on her back in shimmering, silky softness. Long, gleaming strands of hair caught at the white arms in their perpetual and ever-changing rhythmic motion. Canary's arms and her body seemed like two different beings. It was a bewitching sight for Rabia.

When the dancing, singing, and eating came to an end the procession of fair women departed, the lady of the tiara leading and Canary bringing up the rear. Their silk mantles, of all colours, glistened as they moved. Over their heads clouds of white muslin fell, leaving only a narrow slit for the eyes. These blue or grey eyes, framed in black kohl, held a tantalising mystery in their depths. Those of Canary were like precious stones as they sent a parting glance to Rabia, standing in the crowd. The wives of the Cabinet Ministers, standing with Sabiha Hanim, gave their last greeting at the harem door. Through the long vista of the garden Rabia saw a row of closed carriages, horses prancing impatiently, eunuchs in sober black, and grooms in coloured livery.

The grooms opened the carriage doors. That was the end.

Sabiha Hanim said to Rabia, who was standing at her side:

"Canary looked like a huge peacock, good enough to dazzle infants and imbeciles . . . it was no dance at all."

11

KAHIA KADIN, having introduced Rabia as "your pupil," had retired. Rabia was going to have her first music lesson from Vehbi Effendi. Standing in the middle of the room, painfully self-conscious, she asked herself, "Where are his hands?" Somewhere behind that long camel-hair cape, which covered him from his neck to his feet, were the hands which she ought to kiss as etiquette demanded of children. Why did he not offer his hand as did other grown-up people? She looked at him, timid and perplexed. The cornet-shaped cap of his Order, that of the Dancing Dervish, interested her. His head was tilted towards his left shoulder, and his tall figure was slightly bent The leaning figure expressed a concealed attention; within the man his soul lay open, waiting to receive whatever the people around him sent into it.

As his eyes met hers, his thin, ivory-coloured hands emerged from the folds of his cape. Crossing them on his breast he bowed diffidently, saluting her after the manner of his Order.

Rabia was taken aback by his grace and the expression of his face. The eyes were very brown and trustful; the face was almost a triangle, with its large forehead and delicately pointed chin; the nose was long and straight, and the mouth both humorous and tender. He had a reddish-brown beard, almost non-existent on the sunken cheeks, but growing rather thickly on the chin.

"Sit down, daughter," he said, arranging a cushion on the floor for her. While she knelt in obedience, he stooped over her and his long fingers took her hands and placed them

on her knees, one at a time, the fingers outspread. By so doing he communicated a certain ease and receptive calm to the child's habitually contracted body and tense soul.

She watched him throw his cape on the divan and take a seat on a sheepskin spread opposite her on the floor. His woollen trousers were worn; his shirt, buttoned at the throat, had neat patches on the elbows of the sleeves, and the sleeveless camel-hair vest was shiny with wear. In spite of this shabbiness he was immaculately clean, and he wore his clothes with an air of elegance. The moment he sat down he began to give Rabia her first lesson in the rhythm and syncopation of Turkish music.

"Dum, tek, tek, dum, tek," he repeated, as he made her hands beat her knees alternately. It was a regular one-two-three-four, the simplest of measures. When he thought she had caught the swing of it he turned to the divan, which was littered with a number of musical instruments, and took up the reed.

"Now keep time with me," he commanded, and played a simple air in the minor, blowing into the reed with his head constantly tilted towards the left shoulder, and his thin fingers pressing the holes in rapid succession.

Thus began Rabia's music lessons, and as they progressed the rhythm that runs through all Oriental music, and perhaps through the Oriental soul, gradually penetrated her very being.

When she could beat time properly, could beat all the measures on her knees, accompanying the airs which he played on the reed, he taught her to accompany him on the tambourine, the instrument which every singer who cannot play a wood or wind instrument must know how to use. She found it fascinating to produce the combination of sounds peculiar to the tambourine—the tinkle of the castanets and the soft rhythmic thud of the fingers on the taut leather

surface. Yet this was the instrument which her mother said was "unspeakably low and wicked", played only by gypsies and worse than gypsies. When she blurted out at home that she was being taught to play it, Emineh attacked her father:

"Whither is her education in that Konak leading her? Are you going to sit still and see your granddaughter turned into a shameless hussy?"

The Imam stroked his beard, murmuring in perplexity:

"The use of the tambourine is an abomination, especially when used for songs of a sinful nature. . . ." Turning to Rabia, he asked: "Who is your music teacher?"

"Vehbi Effendi, the Dancing Dervish."

"In that case," he solemnly pronounced, "it is different. The Dervish is a saintly person, and his Order uses it to accompany sacred songs. Let the child alone, Emineh."

Once the respectability of the tambourine was established by the Imam, Emineh was powerless; she could no longer nag Rabia about her music lessons. And the girl's native talent for music blossomed out under the able handling of the great master. After the tambourine she had taken up the *ut*. Nor did she stop at that. She learned to play on almost as many instruments as her master, and she practised them during every minute of the long afternoons. After the evening meal she went to Sabiha Hanim's room to entertain that lady. Squatting on the floor, her fingers would wander lingeringly over the tambourine, and she would sing softly to herself. Presently the Pasha too would come in, carrying his *nargileh*. He would tiptoe to the divan, and sitting on a cushion on the floor would puff at the *nargileh*, listening with intense enjoyment.

Sometimes Hilmi too would come in while Rabia was singing to the elderly couple. He always sat and listened with a rapt expression in his dreamy eyes.

"So you are beginning to like the music of your forefathers!" Selim Pasha remarked.

"I have always liked the child's voice," replied Hilmi in a non-committal tone.

Rabia followed the Kahia Kadın to Hilmi's room on that first Thursday evening a little uneasily. The Pasha was not at home, and Hilmi had asked her to sing before his famous music master. She knew of the family dispute with regard to her voice, as to whether it should be trained by Vehbi Effendi or by Peregrini. So completely satisfied was she with her lessons from the Dervish that she was afraid lest Hilmi might persuade the Pasha to let her be taught by this unknown foreigner.

Hilmi was sitting on the piano-stool when the Kahia Kadın pushed Rabia into the room and closed the door on her. Hilmi's two friends, Shevki, a tall, dark man with clean-cut features and sharp eyes, and Galib, a fair, small youth with indefinite features and blurred blue eyes, were standing beside him. Peregrini was leaning over Hilmi's shoulders. The four men gathered round the piano were talking of anything but music.

Peregrini first heard her footsteps on the thick carpet, and turned. The black mantle he wore in the street was still thrown over one shoulder with an air of elegant nonchalance. He had just come in. He himself was a tiny man, and his face was covered with innumerable lines The small black eyes burnt strangely in their very deep sockets. He had a pointed beard and a huge floating tie. He might have been thirty or forty; it was difficult to guess, but his eyes smiled pleasantly, and the friendliness of his voice was disarming:

"So this is the child artist," he said, offering his hand.

The proffered hand of a grown-up person required of Rabia one single thing, and taking the hand she kissed it politely. She had never seen people shake hands. The three

young men laughed, but Peregrini seemed pleased. He found her a soothing contrast to the other Turkish children whom he had taught. They all appeared to be second-hand copies of European children, while this child, in her sober Turkish dress, with her sleek head, and the five bright brown plaits hanging down her back, seemed the genuine article. The gravity of the honey-gold eyes, the unconscious serenity and strength of the big pink mouth, fascinated him. His piercing eyes blazed, and the lines of his face deepened, spreading an attractive grin over his mobile features. Rabia smiled back at him.

"What shall she sing?" asked Hilmi.

"Isn't she a Koran-chanter in the great mosques? Let her chant a part of her Koran in her own style."

Rabia's hand went up to her head instinctively. She was not wearing the head-veil without which she could not chant. Hilmi understood, and hurried out of the room. He was back in a moment, bringing a piece of Spanish lace which he had found in his wife's room. His friends were preparing the customary *mise-en-scène* for Koran-chanting. The cushion for Rabia to kneel on was placed on the floor, and a low table was set before it, with a lighted candle at either end. Rabia's narrow face appeared between the tremulous white flames, the Spanish lace softly framing it. Peregrini, interested by the dramatic aspect of the performance, put out the lamp on the piano. The room sank into shadow, and in that atmosphere of blurred outlines Rabia appeared to him like a sacred picture. He rubbed his hands. "So must Beatrice have appeared to Dante," he murmured.

For an imperceptible instant the childish figure remained motionless. Then some inner tide seemed to rise within her, inducing a slight swaying of the head and the shoulders, which gradually welled, in a strange minor melody, from

Rabia's lips. The line, "In the name of the Merciful . . ." with which every chanter begins, started with a slow swinging rhythm which gathered strength as the child proceeded, the syncopation being most emphatic at the climax, and slowing down in the closing line: "The Great Allah speaks the Truth."

The girl had resumed her motionless pose. To Peregrini it seemed as if the tide which had produced that divine rhythm in her body and voice had ebbed away. He was profoundly stirred, and remained with head bowed, looking more like a devout monk than the gay musician, the philosophical free-thinker which he generally appeared. When he raised his head at last he had lost for the time being his usual exuberance and exaggeration. He patted the girl's shoulders paternally.

"What does your chant mean, little friend?"

Rabia did not know, but Hilmi was on his feet at once, hunting for an old commentary on the Koran. He read from the yellow, dusty pages, translating, while the Italian took notes It was the fourth chapter of the Koran. It ran:

"And your Lord said to the Angels: 'I am going to set upon the earth one who shall rule over it.' They said: 'What, wilt Thou set upon it such as shall make mischief there and shed blood, while we celebrate Thy praise and extol Thy Holiness?' "

The passage from the Koran restored Peregrini to his old lively mood, and he waved his hands.

"It was a similar logic which led me to abandon my cell," he said, putting the note-book back into his pocket.

"I am going to play to you," he whispered to Rabia a minute later, for his wistful mood was returning. The three young men, who admired him, and had regarded him as a master, had never before seen him in this curious state of mind. Apart from his musical talents, his wit and learning,

his knowledge of the Turkish language, literature, and philosophy, and his quick judgement, had enabled him to impose himself upon them as a pattern. The fact that he had defied the all-powerful Catholic Church was a factor in their friendship for him. They believed that they had cast off the bonds of religion, holding as they did that Islam was responsible for every obstacle to progress. They thought of Peregrini as a kindred soul in his bitter and critical attitude to religion, but Rabia's chanting seemed to have thrown the man into almost a religious mood.

"Wouldn't you like to train that voice?" Hilmi asked.

A quick defiance shone in the eyes of the girl.

"No, let the child go on with her own perfect art. Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's! The child belongs to Allah; let her remain where she belongs."

12

EVERY Thursday evening now Rabia was asked to go up to Hilmi's room. After a while Vehbi Effendi began to join them regularly. He seemed to be the only one in the lively little company who did not take Peregrini too seriously, smiling always at the Italian's childish exuberance. Nor did he seem to be much impressed by the quasi-revolutionary talk of Hilmi and his friends. However, it was evident that Peregrini was immensely taken by him. He did his best to draw the Dervish into heated metaphysical discussions, to shock him by his daring religious ideas. Yet the Dervish remained as serene as ever, while he himself grew more and more excited.

The novelty of Peregrini's dramatic personality and his talk fascinated Rabia. She thought he was most original when he spoke appreciatively of the Devil. At such moments his eyes glittered with wicked lights, and his beard shook in the air. All this gave her a curious thrill. So far she had heard nothing but abuse of the Devil. Yet in a way such talk seemed familiar. What child of her age was ever brought up on such endless religious stories?

"Adam would never have dreamed of tasting the forbidden fruit without the Devil's brilliant suggestion," he said

"What would have happened if he hadn't, Signor?" she asked.

"He would have remained in Paradise."

"Wouldn't that have been better, Signor?"

"No, I shouldn't have been here talking to you . . . and the earth is amusing!" The Italian laughed into the girl's

wide-open eyes. Then he became serious all of a sudden. "Listen, child. There is one good quality in the Devil which all of us must admire and try to possess—and that is courage. All courage of the mind comes from him. He gave up his position as an Archangel in Heaven; he preferred to be hurled from the plenty and bliss of Paradise for the sake of his ideas."

"It sounds like vanity," remarked Vehbi Effendi.

"It does, but on a very grand scale. . . . I love huge things. . . . Listen now—I have composed an apology to him."

He went to the piano and struck the opening chords. It was a devastatingly wild and majestic harmony. Little shivers ran down Rabia's spine. She was both frightened and fascinated by the way her heart thumped in her breast.

"Do you think we ought to start Devil-worship in this land in order to make people think?" Galib asked.

Vehbi Effendi dropped his rosaries. For the first time he was going to give his own views on God and the Devil. They were naturally those of the Order of Dancing Dervishes. He sounded as if he were answering Galib, but his eyes rested on Rabia's burning cheeks. He had noted her unholy excitement over this talk of the Devil. Henceforth the girl's soul would be like a ball tossed to and fro between the ex-monk and the Moslem mystic. And Rabia would always be soothed by Vehbi Effendi, though she did not at the moment grasp the significance of his words. Neither did she understand always very clearly what Peregrini said, but she drank in his words none the less, and they went to her young head like strong wine.

"There are no two Powers such as God and the Devil," Vehbi Effendi was saying. "There is a single reality, a single force. The Universe in its various aspects, from the atom to the hugest sun, from the human being to the jellyfish, is

but the manifestation of a supreme Creative Force. All these things are merely the parts of a great and ever-changing picture. Good and bad, ugly and beautiful, God and Devil, they are all invented names. Behind it all, and in it all, is the self-created and self-creating Unity; creating and recreating perpetually, casting its shadows on the screen which we call the Universe. Where the light falls most strongly we have a clue to that Unity—and that is Love."

"What about ugliness, hatred, perversity? Are they not also clues to your self-created and self-creating Force?"—the Italian challenged the Dervish.

"No, they are only the lesser reflections, the shadings, the colours, the medium in which the Eternal Painter works."

"Have you or have you not a separate and everlasting soul?" Peregrini cried.

"Separate in this world. I don't know whether it will be so after death. I believe myself to be only a ray of the Eternal Light. It shines on the body and the body is alive. Where does it go when the perishable carcass is no more? I can't tell. But whether separate or not, the Soul is everlasting. The rest no man will ever know on this side of the curtain."

"Therefore?"

"Therefore the only thing that matters is to cherish Oneness, the consciousness that we are parts of a Great Loving Force. That is the only truth amid the passing shadows and the perishable material used for the composition of an everlasting and ever-changing picture."

Peregrini's eyes softened; Shevki scowled, and the rest listened with a bewildered expression on their faces.

"I wish I knew the whys and wherefores of these things!" the Dervish whispered to himself in a tone of perplexity. "The picture is baffling. It never stands still, it is never

completed for man to perceive as a whole. It evolves, revolves. Through the history of Man and Nature is that perpetual shifting. . . . Come, Rabia, it is too difficult for your mind. Let us sing to our friends, for you and I must be going."

She sat beside him with her tambourine in her hand, and he picked up his reed. She sang, the tambourine marking the measure and harmonising with the high notes of the reed and the regular beat of the low and lovely voice.

"Again the ship of my heart is wrecked and washed ashore," she sang, with a weird melancholy that ran through the whole song until the last line was reached—the line which summed up life as Vehbi Effendi saw it: "Some have fallen into loss of fame and name, and some have fallen into honour and power."

When the two had left the room, Peregrini broke the silence to ask: "Whose daughter is that remarkable child?"

"Oh, the daughter of a clown, a man with no object in life except to smear his face with paint and imitate, most absurdly, the manners of women," Hilmi answered.

"Then an artist? . . ."

"I suppose he was."

"Is the man dead?"

"No, but she has never seen her father for he has been an exile for many years; everybody except my mother seems to have forgotten the poor fool."

"So a sort of 'poor Yorick', whose mouth was often kissed but is now filled with dust! Did the fellow meddle in politics?"

"He wouldn't have understood such things. He was very simple. But the wrath of the fanatical and the conservative was turned against him; his acting was considered to be a corrosive influence. He committed an imprudent and,

well . . . an unsavoury and ungentlemanly act, so he was sent away. As usual, it was my father who had to exile him."

A note of bitterness had crept into Hilmi's voice, as it always did whenever he spoke of his father. However, he controlled it, and continued:

"She lives with her grandfather, an old, ignorant Imam who talks of nothing but Hells and Devils, and curses his son-in-law in his five daily prayers. By the way, don't get interested in the Imam. He is very different from Vehbi Effendi."

"I'd rather have the Imam than Vehbi Effendi," Shevki began. "The Dervish's philosophy is poisonous; even more so than that of the Imam, with his primitive Hell and Heaven. That is superstition, and it is definite. But think of Vehbi Effendi's ideas! Why, a society would go to the dogs if it had no definite and separate conception of good and evil. A God who paints pictures for no purpose, using good and evil merely as colours! Preposterous . . . the logical inference of his philosophy is that everything, even the Red Sultan with his *camarilla*, is a part of the divine scheme. Nobody holding such a pernicious philosophy could be got to rise against things as they are, no matter how bad they might be."

"There speaks the future builder of the State," Peregrini smiled. "Vehbi Effendi is not concerned with that; he is dealing with the soul of the individual; the man within, the hidden being that has its own hunger and thirst, its own quests and dilemmas. It has nothing to do with the State. Better let that alone. If mankind thought of nothing but of the external order, he would be only another species of animal—a community of ants . . . probably infinitely worse. Man without this inner phase of life . . . phew!"

"If ever the Young Turks become a ruling power," interrupted Shevki, with passion, "I will see that the Vehbi

Effendis, in short all mystic thinkers and their Orders, are ruthlessly exterminated. They cannot wield worldly power, but they manage to keep alive a spiritual energy which saps the vitality of a nation, which leads to dreaming and retards material progress. After all, material progress is the only thing which counts; the rest is a useless dream!"

To Peregrini it was as if a new light were being thrown on the hitherto monotonous and artificial minds of his young friends. He had taken their playing at Young Turkism as a thing learned out of books, and discussed in order to pass the time. The violent and practical note in Shevki's words made him wonder. Were there, after all, historical forces at work, forces which would get themselves realised through strange channels? Of Hilmi he expected nothing. He was a sort of Turkish Hamlet, disturbed by the wickedness of his father; one of the brooding, vocative, incoherent Hamlets of this world. No harm in such . . . twenty ghosts could not set them to the task of vengeance or destruction. But Shevki had an ominous mind.

"I suppose destroyers like yourself are inevitable historical forces. The debris must be swept away and place made for the new. But Vehbi Effendi also is necessary in this sorely oppressed and depressed world. He brings comfort and peace to the individual soul."

"In a well-run state," said Shevki pompously, "there won't be souls which need peace and comfort. It is Vehbi Effendi and his philosophy which create the helpless, vague, and fanciful soul, the thinking soul. No, our state will neither oppress nor depress; we shall do away with those who mar its order and threaten its equilibrium."

"So does the Sultan," said Galib, and Peregrini laughed.

Meanwhile Vehbi Effendi and Rabia were following the manservant, who lit the way with a lantern. There was peace

and beauty in the night. As he took leave of the child he pointed at the sky:

"Look, Allah has lighted all his candles to-night, Rabia."

She had a feeling of something impending; she looked up wonderingly. After all, a warm night with the stars out in Istanbul was enough to put any sensitive soul into an expectant mood. Allah's candles, innumerably scattered over the dark-blue dome, had an intimate and friendly look as they scintillated overhead. After Vehbi Effendi had left them the manservant led her through the Sinekli-Bakkal. There was a shorter cut, but he appeared to have forgotten it.

As they turned the corner, the wistaria trellis over the fountain seemed a living wave of purple velvet; it embalmed the shadows of the dilapidated houses, and the slow drip, drip of the tap intensified and materialised the silence. They stood to listen. Far away they heard the barking of solitary street-dogs.

"Odd that there should be light in that window," said the manservant, and Rabia looked up. The window over the grocer's shop which had belonged to her father was a bright oblong. The place had been dark and abandoned as far back as she could remember. In her excitement she caught the servant's hand.

"Who do you think is there?" she asked, her heart beating in her throat.

"May be thieves: I don't know."

"Can't we go in and see?"

"We can't do that," he said, but the girl's agitation had touched him. He had been in Selim Pasha's service for fifteen years, and knew the family history of everyone in the quarter. The sudden beat of the night-watchman's stick gave him some hope of an explanation, and he waited. When the night-watchman came into sight, beating the pavement

with his stick to announce the hour, the manservant stopped him.

"Merhaba, Shevket Aga."

"Merhaba. We are looking at the light in that window; did you notice it?"

"You mean Tewfik's house. He has been back for some time, and is getting ready to open his shop for Ramazan."

The watchman went on his way, but the child stood staring at the faint light and pressing upon her thumping heart with both hands.

"Let us be moving on; he must be in bed," said the servant, taking the child's hand to lead her away from the place.

Rabia walked on. She was thinking of to-morrow, when she would go and talk to her father. How unreal it seemed! At the door of the Imam's house the yellow dog, the dog with the litter of puppies which was her favourite, was waiting for her. It walked around Rabia, rubbing its soft nose against her knees. The girl put her arms around its neck.

"Sarman, Sarman," she sobbed; "my father Tewfik is back!"

She rang the bell, and the rope was pulled from within to open the door. She hurried through the court and went into the house. She walked softly, praying that her mother might not talk to her that night.

13

RABIA, walking hurriedly, and swinging a basket of vegetables, came into the Sinekli-Bakkal early the following morning. A small figure stood in front of the grocer's shop, studying the writing on the door, his hands in his pockets, and whistling a tune. The little fellow was dressed differently from other children. An enormous Damascene silk turban and a loose coat were not the usual dress of little boys. Rabia noticed that his body was queerly shaped, and as he turned round, nearly bumping into her, she saw that he was a dwarf, a middle-aged dwarf, with a serious and kindly face. His eyes were inquisitive, yet sad and cynical, but they had also the indulgence of those blessed with a sense of humour.

"Tewfik," he called over his shoulder into the shop, "there is an early customer."

The man so addressed bent his tall body and thrust his head out of the doorway. His eyes, peering to get a glimpse of the new customer, met a goodly apparition, for Rabia, standing against the old familiar background, was pleasant to look at. The honey-coloured eyes with their curious grey-green flecks, the delicate face in its frame of white muslin, was shining with eagerness. And for her part, Rabia found the face of the man in the shop most pleasing. Unusually tall, he had warm brown eyes and a laughing mouth covered with a long brown bristling moustache. He might have been some thirty years of age.

He spoke with ease and even with a certain volubility. He was acting a part as usual—the grocer opening a new shop.

"We are not open, but we might be able to get you whatever you wish to have. Please walk in; you are our first customer; may you bring us good luck and plenty of custom!"

She lifted her basket, bulging with onions and spinach, and love flowed from the golden depths of her eyes as she laughed gaily.

"I have bought everything I need this morning."

"A pity, but perhaps you will come again."

"Every single morning," she said, with uncalled-for fervour.

Her tone disturbed him. He had a feeling as if his memory were being sharply stabbed. Of whom did the girl remind him? Why, Emineh!—but an Emineh without her pinched mouth and small eyes. What glorious, delightful eyes the child had! His own daughter must be about that age. A wave of heat passed over his face, and his ears tingled; he could hear the voice of the night-watchman:

"Your daughter has grown a lot, Tewfik; she is a Koran-chanter."

"Whose daughter are you?" His voice sounded hoarse and brusque.

"I am the daughter of 'Kiz-Tewfik,' " she said, once more laughing into his eyes.

Everything happened at once. The dwarf leaned against the doorpost, the tears running down his furrowed cheeks at the sight of Tewfik's emotion—a Tewfik who was a human tornado. After the fashion of the folk in the Bible, he lifted up his voice and wept. But his actions were far from having a Biblical dignity. He dragged Rabia into the shop, embraced her, held her at arm's length, gazed at her and embraced her again. He carried the big girl about the shop in his strong arms, nursing and hugging her as if she had been only a baby. He sat her on a sack of beans as he

talked to her, and all this he did with sobs and tears which might have been those of a lunatic.

When he had spent his wild emotion, Tewfik perched himself on a soap-box between the dwarf and Rabia, his arms round their waists, embracing each in turn. He could hardly tell whether looking at Rabia and listening to her voice or embracing her were the greater happiness. She on her side had her protective instincts aroused. Tewfik's soul and the dwarf's body called for mothering and tender handling. She would take charge of them; and after all Tewfik demanded nothing better than to be owned by someone. Had not Emineh owned him?

He began by telling his daughter about the years of his exile, with no chronological order in his tale, but an effect of vivid life. She saw him passing through the first years of misery, tramping about the country, earning a few coins by acting comic scenes in market-places. She saw him lonely, homesick, and hungry, most of the time without a roof to cover his head. When he noted that his tale was clouding her merry eyes he changed his tone.

'When Zati Bey became the governor of Gallipoli, fate smiled on the exiles. Your father became the chief entertainer to the governor, he had a roof over his head, warm clothes for his bare back, and plenty of good food for his empty stomach . . . and he earned these things. He worked hard, at home and elsewhere."

"What a brave man Zati was to protect the exiles! Was he not afraid of the Sultan?"

"I don't know, my Sugar. The other exiles told me that he did it with a purpose. You see, he himself was a kind of exile. He had been a favoured official, but for some reason or other the Sultan had suspected him. His governorship was a polite way of showing that he was no longer in the royal favour. This was the way the Sultan showed his dis-

pleasure to the great; while Zati Bey's patronage of the exiles was a mild kind of blackmail . . . a hint that he would turn Young Turk if the Sultan did not recall him to favour."

Rabia could not exactly grasp this. It sounded like the Pasha's explanation of promotions to Sabiha Hanim. The Big Vill. in rewarding little villains for villainies of various kinds. . . .

"We spent our time in the orchards and flower gardens, making a night of it with Zati Bey and his friends, eating, drinking, and making merry. . . ."

Tewfik stopped. He could not tell her of the sordidness of their night revels, the ugly debauchery of the governor and his friends.

"There was a pock-faced gypsy called Pembeh—Pembeh the dancer. She was not much to look at, but such a saucy devil, so sly and with such a way with her when she danced and talked . . .'

"She must be a bad girl to dance before men," pronounced Rabia, in the virtuous tones of Emineh.

"Don't be hard on her, my Sugar!" Tewfik was distressed. "She was the only one of them who was a friend, a human being. Without her I should have been nothing but a trained animal, a bear or a monkey on a chain, doing tricks to amuse the masters and earn a meal. She was a brave, splendid lass. . . ."

"I shall always love her," Rabia declared generously, and at that Tewfik started embracing her all over again.

"How did you get back, Tewfik?" she asked. She called him Tewfik as though he had been a small brother in her care instead of the big sturdy father that he really was. After all, she had always spoken of him as Tewfik. It delighted him, and he smiled.

"Didn't you know that Zati Bey has been recalled and

appointed Minister of the Interior?"

"Oh yes, yes. . . ."

"Well, he brought me back, and gave me a little money too."

"What have you been doing since?"

"I have been looking for a job in the theatre. My old company has gone to pieces. A new caste is playing in a wooden barrack and calling it 'The Contemporary Theatre.' Why give up the good old sky? The artists learn everything they have to say out of a translated book. I find that very strange. An actor who knows the story of the person he is to represent, knows also how that person speaks. If he cannot make up the words and the acts of the person he is impersonating, he will be like a doll on a string. We made up our conversation on the spot in the old days."

Tewfik shook his head sorrowfully. The condition of the old-time theatre saddened him. However, he brightened up as he began to tell her of his meeting with his ancient crony, the famous dwarf actor, the matchless fool.

"He and I are sworn brothers. We shall never separate. He is your Uncle Rakim. . . ."

She leaned over and looked into the eager eyes of the dwarf. How his big eyes resembled those of the yellow dog! She jumped down and put her arms around his neck and kissed him noisily on both cheeks. He rubbed them, and squeaked with delight, his eyes roving after the childish figure running about the shop, poking her nose into sacks, boxes, and cases.

Tewfik followed her proudly, talking all the time. He had dreams of becoming rich and restoring the old theatre. He was going to give a series of shadow-plays in the back garden on Ramazan nights. It would advertise the shop, but Tewfik would have done it in any case. His tongue rusted, his mind lost its agility if he hadn't an audience to jest with.

Caught by the magic of his dreams, she began to discuss with him and the dwarf the grocery business and the show as though she were going to live with them. When Rakim upset the vegetable-basket, and the onions rolled over the floor, she woke up to the facts of life. Her mother nagged her even when she had finished her marketing in record time, and now it was nearly noon. The Imam would be clamouring for his lunch. She snatched up the basket and began to run, but not without sending her father a parting smile, and calling out:

"I shall come back after lunch, Tewfik."

14

TRUE to her word, Rabia appeared again that afternoon. The girl did not tell the two men of the trying time she had had at home. Instead, she set to work. The first thing to be done was to clean the place. And there she was, her long gown lifted at the two sides and tucked into her belt, one bare foot on a brush, the other on the floor, one hand firmly placed on her hip, the other stretched out for balance, her body moving backwards and forwards, her foot scrubbing the floor The dwarf had taken off his shoes and socks and was drawing water from the well in the garden, fetching it upstairs in a leaking bucket, pouring it on the spots to which she pointed. Tewfik remained in the shop, putting the finishing touches to the paper figures of the shadow play, but he ran up every two minutes to offer his services.

Rabia, struggling with the accumulated dirt of years, was feeling a lightness of heart which she had never experienced in the Imam's house. For the first time in her life she was working in the spirit of play, released from the colossal inhibitions of her childhood. She was at last a free human being, tasting joy without a sense of guilt. Occasionally she knit her brows at the thought that her mother must find out the truth, for she had not mentioned her meeting with her father.

When she had come in late that morning Emineh had been worse than a fury. Where had she been? Rabia had remained silent. After the geniality and fascination of her father, her mother had appeared doubly dismal and insufferable. The child's refusal to explain the reasons for her delay

had made Emineh imagine all sorts of impossible things. Emineh had even struck her daughter; only the arrival of the Imam had stayed her hand

"Let me go to my father," Rabia had said rebelliously.

"Your father?" had shrieked Emineh. "He shall never set foot in Istanbul! If he did I would go from door to door exposing his wickedness, never resting until the Sultan exiled him once more to the confines of the world!"

This threat was so terrifying that Rabia had decided to keep her father's return a secret as long as she could. The Imam unwittingly helped her.

"It is time for Rabia to go to the Konak for her lessons, Emineh," he had said, and he turned to Rabia. "Wash yourself and come with me."

This had put an end to the scene, and Rabia had gone out with the Imam. He saw her, as he thought, on her way to the Konak, but the moment he had turned back she changed her course and ran to the shop. She would tell Sabiha Hanim the truth that evening. The old lady would know how to get her out of this difficult situation.

That evening Rabia found there was company in Sabiha Hanim's room. She could not speak of her escapade. The next night her courage evaporated, and she was again silent. The situation dragged on for a week. Rabia neglected her lessons in the afternoons, and went regularly to the shop, going to the Konak only in the evenings. The life there was too complicated and busy for Rabia's absence in the afternoons to be immediately noticed. In the meantime she was feverishly cleaning the dilapidated old house over the grocer's shop, and restoring it to order. The three of them spoke sometimes of the possibility of her being found out, and wondered what the result would be. Discovery was inevitable. The thought made Tewfik miserable, but Rakim consoled him. If the worst happened Rabia was now old

enough to escape; the law gave any child over nine the right to choose between her father and mother. Rabia assured them that she would stick to Tewfik through thick and thin. So the three grew cheerful again, enjoying the moment and letting the future take care of itself.

Rabia's adventure was discovered on a Thursday, and on that very day they had a grand time. Thanks to Rabia, the men also had been at work, getting the shop ready. The sacks and boxes stood in tidy rows, loose articles were picturesquely spread out or hung up or piled on the shelves, and the place was fancifully decorated with coloured paper. It had quite a festive look, and Rabia felt as happy as if she herself had been going to run it.

The cardboard figures for the shadow-play were ready also. The three of them, after consulting together, selected the part of the garden across which the curtain was to be stretched, and the part where the mats were to be spread on the ground, with a few stools as front seats for the quality. It would be a late summer Ramazan, with balmy air and many coloured skies, with ever so many divine candles lit in the dark purple-blue canopy over this poor little world of sinners.

"Our singing is awful, Rakim, and we have no tambourine to make the necessary noise," complained Tewfik, his jaw dropping with boyish disappointment and anxiety.

"I will bring my tambourine from the Konak, it has such jolly castanets. . . . I can sing too. . . . Oh, I can sing, and I play the tambourine so nicely!" boasted Rabia.

"Really, my Sugar?" His eyes narrowed into slits and his lips trembled. He added, almost dismally: "But you are a Koran chanter, Rabia; how can you sing silly songs and play the tambourine?"

When he learned that Rabia was a pupil of Vehbi Effendi he said: "You have to sing in the proper style . . . slow and

a regal fashion. That wouldn't do for the street children and the outcast shadow-player."

She laughed:

"Teach me the song and I will sing it as you want me to." She ran off to the kitchen. She was gone only for a moment. Tewfik saw her step out into the garden, holding a tin tray as she would have held a tambourine and playing it with her elegant and bewitching air, her long fingers running up and down the metal surface, drawing out the tune.

Tewfik snatched the pretended tambourine from her hands and began to rattle it, singing at the top of his voice the entrance song of the chief character. She clapped her hands in glee and in turn took the tray from him. She had a sensitive ear, which could quickly and accurately catch and remember a tune. She was imitating his rattling on the tray and his way of singing, the self-same beat in her voice:

"Have I not told thee not to love . . ."

"I shall buy you a monkey and turn you into a monkey-trainer, Rabia!" he laughed. "Then the pennies will rain from the windows, and the monkey will dance better than the gypsy wench!"

The allusion made her think of the times she had watched the gypsies training their monkeys, and the monkeys performing in the street. She remembered how she used to flatten her nose against the lattice, so that it remained flat for quite a time, her eyes peering through the tiny holes to get a good view. The next moment she was beating the tin tray with the regular tom-tom of the jungle, her body thrown back, her head on one side, she herself springing from side to side with her face perpetually working and her foot kicking the imaginary monkey to make it dance. The dwarf could no longer contain himself: he had to turn somersaults on the ground, walking on all fours, kicking,

screeching, peeling imaginary nuts, throwing the shells at Tewfik, making faces, and dancing around her more and more wildly, as if he were the youngest and friskiest of monkeys.

That was the climax of the week in which the three had lived with no thought of the morrow.

15

WHEN the Kahia Kadin came to the music-room with a message from Hilmi Bey, Vehbi Effendi was teaching the young slaves. Hilmi asked the Dervish to come up to his room after dinner that evening, and to bring his pupil Rabia.

"She has not come for her lessons since last Thursday. I thought the child was ill."

Kahia Kadin left the room hurriedly. She was perplexed, for she remembered that Rabia had been in regular attendance on Sabiha Hanim in the evenings. She decided to go and question Emineh, for the shrew had unaccountable whims.

Rabia's mother was at her washing when the Kahia Kadin rang her door-bell. Being as usual out of temper, she felt uncertain as to whether she should open the door or ignore the sound. The bell went on ringing. At last she pulled the rope that lifted the latch. She waited for the visitor to cross the courtyard, but no one appeared. Finally she wiped her wet red hands, and went out into the courtyard. The Kahia Kadin was standing inside and looking about her as if inspecting the place.

"Where is Rabia?" she inquired, without even looking at Emineh.

"She has left for the Konak as usual."

"I have come straight from there. The child has not been attending her lessons in the afternoons, although she comes in the evenings. I wanted to know why. . . ."

"How long has she been away in the afternoons?"

"Since last Thursday."

"Oh the pigsc'ld, the daughter of a clown!" Emineh hissed. Her lips were now squeezed into a single ugly line, while her eyes were screwed into dangerous pin-points. She was thinking. It was on Friday, the day after Thursday, that Rabia had been late. And the girl had been unlike herself ever since. She had done her work with more than the ordinary diligence, but she had had a rapt look; she had been out of touch with her surroundings, and indifferent to Emineh's scoldings. Had not Tewfik looked just so before their separation years and years ago? She had lost him after he had been in just such a strange mood. She was perhaps going to lose her daughter as she had lost her husband. The daughter would escape her just as the father had done. How like her father she had looked during this last week! Emineh's anxiety, and her anger at the child's inexplicable conduct, were confused with the tragedy of ten years ago. She had almost forgotten the woman standing before her.

"Why didn't I break her bones? Why didn't I turn her flesh into sausage before she started on her path of shame?" Emineh wailed, beating her head with her red and swollen hands.

"Come now, Emineh Hanim. I know what you are imagining. But Rabia is only a child. . . ."

"Eleven years old and a child? For such as you it is nothing that a girl whose breasts are already like apples should wander in the streets! In these days, too, when the Beaus and bullies invade the Sinekli-Bakkal! You and your lady, who is not ashamed to cover her face with paints and her eyes with kohl at her age. . . ."

"Don't stretch your tongue to such ladies as mine. . . ."

"Won't I though? You licker of rich men's bowls, you horned match-maker, you hired go-between. . . ." Emineh spat in the woman's face. "Do you think I am afraid of your lady because she happens to be the wife of a Pasha? I'll make

her the laughing-stock of the very dogs in the street. . . ."

The Kahia Kadin was cowed. She could have told the unspeakable shrew a thing or two, but she knew that the Pasha would have her dismissed if she were the means of creating a scandal. The Imam, who rested in the afternoon, had heard the disturbance, and came down to see what the matter was, his bedroom slippers dragging on the stairs. The Kahia Kadin slipped away at once, closing the door behind her as quickly as she could.

That particular Thursday was enjoyed to the full by Sabiha Hanim. It was as good as being at a theatre all day long. Scene followed scene in her room, each different from the other, and in each the pathetic and the comic were mingled in due measure. That is how she liked life—laughter lightly seasoned with heartache.

Early in the afternoon Pembeh, the gypsy dancer, appeared. After her long wanderings in the provinces she was back in the capital, and had come at once to pay her respects to Sabiha Hanim. The gossip about official circles in the provinces and especially the story of Zati Bey's life at Gallipoli, related in the gypsy's husky voice, was picturesque and amusing to a degree. Before the ripple of laughter smoothed itself out on the old lady's lips the housekeeper came in with a tragic face. The tale of Rabia's mysterious absence and Emineh's disgraceful and ominous behaviour followed. In the middle of the tale Emineh was announced. The enraged mother burst into Sabiha Hanim's presence screeching like forty owls. And the housekeeper, who, with the gypsy had hastily retired, listened at the door, at a safe distance from Emineh, who stood there and called Sabina Hanim the most extraordinary names. They both marvelled at the resourcefulness and self-control of the lady, which seemed little short of miraculous.

"Be seated," said Sabiha Hanim to Emineh, in a more than usually pleasant tone.

"I won't! I have come to take my child away from this nest of corruption!"

"I shall find out whether the Imam approves of this rude language," her hostess said with dignity.

Her stern tone checked the hysterical woman, for she knew how abjectly her father had always courted the favour of the Konak.

"I didn't know what I was saying. I have been like a mad dog since I heard of Rabia's shameless conduct. Where is she? Where has she been?"

"I know where she has been, and I know where she is," lied Sabiha Hanim. She was shielding a little friend; she felt as excited as a child. "I'll send her home to-night earlier than usual, and she will tell you herself. Now you go home." And Sabiha Hanim rose, leaning on her stick. "You had better drink a strong dose of lemon-blossom water; it will calm your nerves."

Emineh retired, a little taken aback, and with a sense of defeat.

"Who is the woman who sounds like the heroine in Tewfik's *Kilibik*?" exclaimed Pembeh, as she followed the housekeeper back into Sabiha Hanim's room.

"She is the original—for she is, or used to be, Tewfik's wife,"—and Sabiha Hanim told the gypsy the story of Rabia's life, whereupon Pembeh told Sabiha Hanim all about Tewfik's life at Gallipoli, and her friendship with the comedian, while the housekeeper impatiently asked them to stop this frivolous and useless talk, and discuss the serious situation which they had to face. And in the middle of this counsel of war Rabia herself arrived.

"Now Rabia Abla," said Sabiha Hanim, blinking at the girl, "you'd better tell us at once where you have been

spending your afternoons. Your mother was here an hour ago, and I told her I knew where you were. Out with it!"

The game was up. Still, the confidence of the old lady, and her loyalty in standing up for her and screening her with her authority in the face of her mother's natural anger, seemed hopeful and reassuring. But her mind was haunted by the possibility of being wrenched away from her father. Her throat went dry, and she collapsed, stammering in agony:

"I meant to tell you, but you had visitors that night, and then I was afraid. Oh, don't let them take me away from him" And her throat swelled with sobs until she could hardly speak.

"Him?" Sabiha Hanim was both amused and concerned. "What have you been doing, you absurd child?"

"My father is here; he is opening his shop again. I have been cleaning the place for him in the afternoons."

"I am off to see my Tewfik of Gallipoli!" the gypsy sang, and danced out of the room, while a servant once more announced Rabia's mother. Really, things were happening much more suddenly than they do on the stage, but Sabiha Hanim was again equal to the occasion. Coolly and quietly she ordered Rabia to be taken out before Emineh was shown in.

"I have been watching the door," Emineh announced sullenly. "Rabia came in an hour ago. Why didn't you send her home at once?"

"Not quite so long. I am afraid you have not taken enough lemon-blossom water. You are still highly agitated!" Sabiha Hanim shook her finger. "I had better tell you myself. Her father has come back, and Rabia has been going to the shop in the afternoons."

The blow was unexpected.

"You are laughing at me!" the woman muttered stupidly.

"Go and see for yourself!" Triumph and malevolence could hardly be kept out of the lady's voice.

"I will take my daughter away!" Emineh staggered to her feet.

"You are not in a reasonable state of mind. Better let the Pasha and your father handle the matter. I will keep her here to-night. To-morrow will be ample time for them to make arrangements. The child has the right to choose between her father and mother. That is the law of the land and the Prophet."

"In the meantime you'll persuade my daughter to choose her father!" Emineh sneered.

"I will do my very best to persuade her to remain with such a good mother as you have been," Sabiha Hanim sneered back.

As a matter of fact, she spent that evening heartening and encouraging the frightened girl to choose her father.

16

THE Imam had the air of a man sorely tried and wronged. He bent his head and stared at the carpet, speaking in broken tones. The Pasha was to arbitrate on Rabia's case, and he had decided to hear the Imam first.

"I am ready to accept our Pasha's decision as the sacred law," the old man was saying. "What I regret most is not the losing of the child. She is sure to choose her father. He is irresistible; all followers of the Devil are. But alas! after all my efforts, after all the careful training which the famous masters of Your Excellency's house have given the girl, I fear lest Tewfik will take her to Zati Bey. She would become the plaything of that drunkard!" He wiped his eyelids, overcome by the thought of such a possibility; but his sunken, fiery eyes were furtively watching the Pasha's face.

"I shall give explicit orders that she is never to be taken to Zati Bey's house." There was anger in the voice. That was a good sign.

"Our Pasha is certainly the stronger and the more favoured by His Majesty." The Imam was rubbing his hands. "Tewfik's opening a shop in the Sinekli-Bakkal is significant. A protégé of Zati Bey . . . of course the people will think that he is a spy. His neighbours are too humble to be spied on . . . therefore . . ." And the Imam looked incredibly shrewd, peering into the Pasha's eyes, and trying to make him grasp his meaning. But he had overdone his guilelessness in trying to exploit the political rivalry between Selim Pasha and the new Minister of the Interior.

"Let us not talk of State Affairs, Imam Effendi," The

Pasha was secretly amused at the old man's clumsy efforts to rouse him against Tewfik because of the clown's connection with Zati Bey.

The Imam at once realised his lack of success in the line he had adopted. He changed his tactics. With such a man as the old Pasha it was best to be frank. Frankness was more disarming.

"When the child goes to Tewfik her earnings will also be his. How am I to live, Pasha Effendi? I have spent a great deal of money on her [this was a lie], and I have given much time to her upbringing. I hoped for her support in my old age. As you know, the people are no longer god-fearing They pay so little for the services of an Imam nowadays. If it were not for Rabia's earnings I should seldom be able to afford myself a hot meal."

Apart from the statement that he had spent a great deal of money on Rabia, he was telling the truth; at all events, it was nearly the truth.

Tewfik entered the room before the Pasha had time to answer the Imam. So crestfallen and frightened was the actor that Selim Pasha smiled.

"So you are back? I hope you have gathered your wits together and mended your ways."

"I have given up the theatre, and am going to open a grocer's shop. I hope to have the favour of the Konak," he said hurriedly. The words had been previously put into his mouth by Rakim, and their utterance gave him a chance to recover from his confusion.

"Bring in the child," ordered Selim Pasha, and on her appearance his expression softened.

"Come here, Rabia Hanim," he said, his voice almost tender. But he conducted the whole affair as justly as any old-fashioned Cadi of the realm. "Here is your father, whom you have never seen, and here is your grandfather, who has

brought you up all these years. With which do you choose to live?"

"With my father, Effendim." The voice was clear and had a determined ring.

"Think of the time and the money and . . . and the affection your grandfather has bestowed on you. Your father has no woman in the house. It would be advisable for you to live with your grandfather under the care of your virtuous mother. I would see that you were allowed to visit your father regularly."

Rabia listened patiently and politely, then repeated, in the same clear and determined voice:

"I want to live with my father, Effendim." She had been looking with confidence into Selim Pasha's face, but all of a sudden she turned to Tewfik, and, snatching his hand, stood before him. She was taking charge of her big, helpless father. "You see, Effendim, my father has no one to take care of him. I want to look after him."

"Are you able to take care of your daughter, Tewfik?"

"I am," he answered, profoundly moved.

"He wants her because he knows that Ramazan is at hand, and he will get her earnings . . ." the Imam cried.

"Let the Imam have her earnings! I only want my daughter."

"Are you rich enough to manage without her fees?" Suspicion gleamed in the Pasha's eyes.

Rabia pleaded for her father.

"There is the grocer's shop which we are opening. I am going to run the shop with him, and everybody will be buying from us. You, too will be buying from us, won't you?" In the midst of her brave pleading she broke down, and hiding her face on Tewfik's sleeve began to shake with sobs.

The mixture of courage and fragility in the girl was

astounding. By Allah, Selim Pasha would stand by her.

"Retire to the harem, my child. Let everyone retire. I want to speak to Tewfik alone."

The Imam thought that after all he had the best of the bargain. He smarted a little under Rabia's preference of her father. But to have all her earnings without her [illegible] was compensation enough. If he could only make Emineh see it in that reasonable light! But there was no hope of that. She was a hard nut to crack. He would take care to curse the girl before her mother. He walked out of the Konak with his mind divided between the exact terms which he would use in announcing the news to Emineh and an acute interest in what the Pasha might be saying to Tewfik. Selim Pasha would insist that Rabia should be kept out of Zati Bey's reach, and he would also want Rabia to go on with her lessons . . . he would probably bully Tewfik a bit. . . . The Imam was guessing correctly.

17

LIFE was a thing of wonder in Tewfik's shop. Rabia, the only woman of the family, lorded it over the others more completely than her mother had done, and the shop hummed with custom all day long. The three of them were nearly drunk with delight as they watched the shadows flitting across the street. They were playing with life as kittens play with a reel of silk, clawing and unrolling the endless thread, heedless of the possibility of getting caught in the tangle.

Rakim regarded himself as the brains of the family. Behind his perpetual grimacing and clowning he planned for the others; he was always planning. Outwardly he was like a dog, dependent on them for caresses, loyal and affectionate, ready to bark at a suspicious character, to spring up and bite him.

Into this romp and gambol of the trio Pembeh was for ever projecting herself. Having nominated herself Sabiha Hanim's chief entertainer, she had settled down at the kiosk for the time being. Daily and merrily she turned the corner of the street, threw jokes at the women, and walked into the shop.

On Saturday afternoons Tewfik sat by himself at the counter. He felt a little lonely. What a time Rabia took with her lessons, and how long Rakim stayed away buying supplies! When only a week remained before Ramazan, Tewfik perceived the shadow of a tall dancing Dervish on the pavement on the other side of the street. The man himself crossed the street, and, stooping in order to pass through the low doorway, entered the shop.

"Is this the shop of Tewfik Effendi, the father of Rabia Hanim?"

"I am Tewfik, sir."

"I am her music master. I want to talk to you on a matter concerning her."

"Are you Vehbi Effendi?" Tewfik was tingling with excitement.

The smile said clearly: "There is nothing in that to be excited about!" while the voice explained gravely: "You see, my son, I do not give lessons on Ramazan days; I stay in the Monastery; but I should like to make an exception in your daughter's favour, for she has gifts that are out of the ordinary. If there is a convenient place here I will come in after the evening prayers on a Thursday."

This meant the transference of Rabia's lessons from the Konak to the house over the grocer's shop. It meant too that Vehbi Effendi would teach Rabia without receiving payment from Selim Pasha. It meant, above all, Rabia's spiritual adoption by Vehbi Effendi. That such an eminent master should be interested in his daughter transported Tewfik with delight.

"What a great honour, sir!" he said, his voice trembling. "Won't you come in and drink a cup of coffee in my back garden?"

"Rabia Abla, ten paras' worth of chewing-gum!" shouted a shrill voice from the street.

"Come in, you rogue!" Tewfik measured out and wrapped up the chewing-gum. The barefooted boy came in, wiping his nose on his sleeve, and holding the ten-para piece ostentatiously in one hand. Tewfik offered him the chewing-gum, patted him on the shoulder, and whispering something into his ear which the Dervish did not catch, sent him out of the shop. The boy grinned and licked his lips as he put his ten-para piece back into his pocket.

"Hadn't you better remain here and carry on your business?"

The scene had drawn an appreciative smile from the Dervish. Tewfik detected this and glowed with gratitude. Even Rakim scolded him for his constant refusal of ten-para pieces from children.

"When Rabia is away I take it easy, sir. It will make her so happy to know who has paid us a visit. She is at her Persian lesson." He led the way to the garden, talking all the while.

"Does she scold you at times?"

"Doesn't she just! She is more like a big brother than a daughter. Her mother too had a tongue. . . ." He grinned over memories which time had softened a little.

Vehbi Effendi passed through a much scrubbed and tidy kitchen into the back garden. This was Tewfik's favourite domain, a place he tended lovingly and kept in good order. Vehbi Effendi gazed at the bright panes of the window above the kitchen, half muffled by the drooping leaves of the vine trellis; they were crimson in the setting sun. Wild honeysuckle and jasmine crept past the kitchen door and climbed up to the roof. Under the walnut tree the usual clean mat was spread.

Tewfik laid out his tobacco-pouch and invited the Dervish to sit down. He himself retired for a moment to prepare the coffee. Pigeons were cooing on the branches overhead, and the friendly atmosphere warmed the visitor. Tewfik soon came back with the coffee-tray. He was talking from the moment he entered the garden, but without a visible effort at making conversation. Lost in the homeliness and peace of the place, Vehbi Effendi listened. He liked Tewfik . . . one of Allah's vagabond and irresponsible children . . . he had the hidden mark of grace, and was not unlike those who, after stormy experiences in life, passed through the

doorway of Vehbi Effendi's monastery, and remained in the shelter of that fold of initiates to the end of their days.

On another day, when Rakim was in charge of the shop, perched on a high stool which had been made to order for him, and which enabled the dwarf to reach the counter and appear an ordinary human being, a little man with a lined face walked in. He was wearing a black cape and holding a wide-brimmed felt hat in his hand. His movements were brusque, and he looked sharply about the shop.

Sinekli-Bakkal was a Moslem quarter, and the poor Christians in the neighbourhood did not wear felt hats. This must be a foreigner from the aristocratic alien quarter. Had the name and fame of their shop reached so far? Rakim jumped down from the stool and went to serve the customer.

"What do you wish for, Signor?"

Peregrini had come into the shop with some misgiving. Though timidity was alien to his nature, the houses of the poorer Moslems had been as closed fortresses to him. He had been able to penetrate into the houses of the rich: even the Palace had hardly any secrets for him. Yet he did not know how he would be received in this grocer's shop. The dwarf, popping up and down like a cork on a string, reassured and thawed him. But he still looked about the shop with some bewilderment, for he did not quite know what to buy. He pointed out at random to the large round *gullaj* discs in their festive ribbons.

Rakim was about to choose the gayest, when he stopped, his face clouding and his eyes suspicious. Felt hats and *gullaj* discs seemed to be incongruous. That queer white stuff which even the Turks bought only at Ramazan was out of keeping with the strange customer. Had he walked in merely to have a look at a funny dwarf?

"Do you know how it is cooked, Signor?" His voice was no longer amiable.

"I have always wanted to buy them, but did not dare. I do not know how to cook them. Perhaps you can tell me."

He had invented this explanation on the spur of the moment, but as he spoke his inquisitive mind was becoming genuinely interested. He sounded convincing. Taking out his note book, he wrote down the recipe which the dwarf gave him. But when he had paid for the stuff, and tucked the packet under his arm, he still lingered, talking to Ramazan.

"I am Hilmi Bey's music master," he said.

"Really?"

"I am a friend of Vehbi Effendi as well. On Thursday evenings he and his pupil Rabia Hanim always came to Hilmi Bey's room. What a voice she has! Are you perchance her father?"

"Her uncle . . ." he grinned, and added: "Her pet monkey too. Vehbi Effendi, who does not teach at Ramazan, comes here for Rabia's sake on Thursday evenings. That is, he has done so since Ramazan has begun."

"That is why I have missed them. I loved listening to her chanting. I hear that she chants at the great mosques. Which of them, I wonder?"

"On Thursdays at Santa Sophia, on Wednesdays and Saturdays at Fatih, and other afternoons in the little Mesjit of the Sheikh-Bakkal. She makes pots of money, but it all goes to her grandfather, by order of the Pasha. We three keep shop here and earn our living. We also have shadow-plays in Ramazan, and if you care to come I will give you a free ticket. Tewfik is great at it."

"I shall certainly come."

Peregrini was comfortably settled on a soap-box now, fanning himself with the round white disc. The flies buzzed; there was no other sound in the street. The faithful on fast days slept away the afternoons. He felt strangely

elated. This sudden intimacy and the alien background . . . he had the same sort of feeling which he had experienced when he had first entered the Masonic Lodge. He had been initiated into the mystery of mysteries which was Rabia's background.

"I must hear her chant at Santa Sophia," he said, smiling dreamily.

The dwarf looked puzzled, his eyes on the felt hat.

"The congregation is not used to foreign visitors during religious rituals," he said tactfully.

Peregrini had followed the direction of Rakim's gaze.

"I will not wear a hat," he said, answering Rakim's thought. "I have a fez at home. I understand religious feelings. I used to be a monk once, my friend. That means a kind of Dervish."

"Aren't you any more?"

"No; but a monk is a monk, even when he has left his Order. I ran away from the monastery."

"You did. . . ." Rakim's mouth stayed open, so amazed was he. "Did you run away because you did not believe in religion any more?"

"Something like that. But religion is something which remains in one's system. It is an incurable passion; shall I say, a vice? I am not religious; I hardly know whether I believe in anything: but I cannot get away from it. I am always with the people who perform religious rites. I love churches, mosques, and temples. I lose my head when I hear chanting; I wallow in rituals. I am like a fly that, too full to suck, yet can't get away from the honey-pot. Are you yourself religious?"

"Certainly, certainly, having been born a Moslem. Thanks to Allah! But mosques, and indeed any places of prayer, depress me, and I am positively afraid of churches. Rituals put me to sleep, and I cannot abide the company of religiously

minded people. I don't mind telling you that I do not pray five times a day. My friend Tewfik—that is, Rabia's father—is just like me."

'Don't you pray even at Ramazan?"

Rakim chuckled; he could speak freely to the man who had run away from a monastery.

"No, not even at Ramazan. But Tewfik and I—we pretend to fast. We do it to please Rabia, who does all these things."

"Doesn't she find you out?"

'You see, when the drums of Sahur beat in the street at midnight we eat with her, and we get ready for the next day's fasting. In the morning we get up late, and touch no food until she leaves for her chanting at the mosque. Then we eat and smoke. . . . When she comes we pretend to break our sham fast with her at sunset."

"How ingenious!" Peregrini laughed.

"The only unusual thing is that we are gay, and men who fast are cross. I am sure she attributes our cheerfulness to our angelic nature. I shall really fast the last three days for her sake.'

'Why not for your own?"

A shade of bitterness clouded Rakim's genial grin.

"Children do not fast, monkeys never, and the Almighty created me in the image of a child-monkey . . . and the image is fixed."

After this, when Vehbi Effendi came on Thursday evenings to teach Rabia, Peregrini invariably dropped in an hour later. As it was natural that Hilmi and his two inseparable friends should haunt any place where they could be near Peregrini, they also came. The humble, bare but spacious room above the shop became a kind of intellectual and musical centre on Thursday evenings during Ramazan. On other evenings the comedians and the old companions of Tewfik, the gay element of the Sinekli-Bakkal, filled his room.

18

THE latter half of Ramazan was very lively. The juvenile audience at Tewfik's show increased, so that the garden was crammed. Rabia sold the tickets in the shop, and saw that the children entered the garden through the kitchen, in some sort of order. She closed the doors after the show had begun, and slipping behind the stretched curtain, would watch Tewfik manipulating his paper figures. To each he gave almost a human expression, his voice changing from that of a dandy to that of a eunuch, then to that of a woman, a child, a bully, and then to the unearthly accents of the Jinn. He managed to sing with spontaneous gaiety, producing a wild rhythm which Rakim helped to emphasise.

Rabia played the tambourine, and helped to produce the low hums and buzzes which the Jinn and other supernatural creatures were supposed to emit. Now and then she peeped from the side of the curtain and saw Peregrini sitting on one of the stools in the front row—the orchestra seats. Far behind him Vehbi Effendi squatted on the mat, his cornet-shaped cap visible above the heads of the children. Both men were shaking with laughter, and her own rippling laughter at her father's absurdities rang out as clearly as that of the children in front of the curtain.

During those last fifteen days of the holy month she saw Peregrini also in the mosques in which she chanted. He was accompanied by Rakim, and he looked rather funny, for his fez was a little too small for his big head. Both he and Rakim had the absorbed air of her usual listeners. Under that huge, hazy dome, where the golden candles flickered like dream-stars above the flowing outlines of the bowing

figures, and solitary coughs echoed with tenfold intensity from a hundred corners, she forgot Peregrini's presence as she lost herself in her chant, swaying her slender body to and fro. A group of women encircled her desk, and behind them, at a respectable distance, sat the men. These latter listened to her voice with an intensity which made her more aware of their collective presence than of that of the women. Only once did she perceive Vehbi Effendi's graceful silhouette beside Peregrini's. His eyes were closed, and he was listening in rapt attention. For an imperceptible instant she stopped, her lips trembling. The presence of the Master awed her.

"He created man of crackling clay like the potters, and He created the firmaments from the smokeless fire. . . . The Lord of Two Easts and the Lord of Two Wests . . . His are the ships which rise from the sea like mountains. Everyone upon it is transient, but the Face of my Lord, endowed with majesty and honour, shall endure."

Her lovely voice was wandering through an arabesque of intricate minor melody. She was rendering the passage with a contemplative, mystic majesty. It was a curious coincidence which had made her chant the very line that constituted the basis of Moslem mysticism. Vehbi Effendi was thrilled by the beauty of her art and her voice. Yet she herself divorced her chanting from all religious and intellectual significance. She was thrilled by the lovely sound, and that was all.

As the two men left the mosque, Rakim trudging along behind them, Peregrini, looking at the pigeons in the yard, whispered to the Dervish:

"Put that girl behind two candles and a desk, at once she conjures up a demon or an angel by the strange harmony that flows from her lips. It is uncanny, how she deprives one of all reasonable thought by the magic of her chanting!"

"The contradictory aspects of the girl's nature blend in those moments. She achieves oneness in her chant . . . she attunes herself to the Infinite."

Ramazan came to an end, and with it Tewfik's show. Tewfik distributed sweets in coloured paper bags to each child. The children stood in a crowd before the shop and cheered him. Those who had brought drums began to beat them, and the crowd broke into the farewell song of Ramazan: "Behold it has come, behold it is going!" They swung their coloured lanterns, suddenly illuminating bits of dilapidated pavement and the familiar slopes of the old eaves, which leapt into light and passed again into darkness as the crowd marched off, still beating their drums and singing "Behold it has come, behold it is going!" A shadow-play, the life of each human being, the universe itself—behold it has come, behold it is going!

Tewfik's guests climbed the stairs to drink iced sherbets. Hilmi's two friends were there. Not only the good-natured Galib had enjoyed the evening, but also the dark and difficult Shevki. The general air of goodwill was heightened when Pembeh arrived from the Konak, bringing baskets of food and fruit. She and Rabia began to prepare supper in the kitchen.

The men upstairs were in a rare mood. Peregrini had carried in his stool from the garden, and was sitting upon it, while Rakim squatted on the floor touching his knee. Hilmi and Galib leaned against each other, still laughing at the absurdities of the show. Tewfik was exhausted, and his throat ached. he kept on mopping his face with an enormous handkerchief Vehbi Effendi drew at a pipe which no longer glowed. Waves of thought seemed to pass visibly over his usually smooth forehead.

"Tewfik has illustrated for us what the One God, the

Living Thought, the Animator of the Universe, does to His creatures. Flesh or paper, the creature exists when thought is breathed into it. Tewfik made bits of paper live—they made the little ones laugh or cry in sympathy with the feeling which they expressed. I understood fully to-night the significance of these words of Jesus, the son of Mary: 'He is a God not of the dead but of the living; for all live unto Him.'"

He stopped and relighted his pipe, and as it glowed again he murmured softly: "I dream of a set of shadow-figures which will be made to illustrate and to teach to the children Love and Brotherhood. Buddha, Jesus, Mevlana,[1] and humbler saints and messengers of Love should be the principal figures, acting the most impressive scenes of their lives. With appropriate music and libretti conceived by great artists the future generations would be reared in thoughts and sentiments which would create the True Civilisation."

"I dream of a set," the harsh and strident voice of Shevki continued, "wherein only the wicked, the corrupt, the tormentors of men will figure. Our own bloody Sultan and his *camarilla*—a set which will be condemned for ever to act their abominable acts for the coming generations. I am all for teaching the gospel of Hate—a hate which will make the future generations raze to the ground every scrap of the old, rotten world—wipe the slate clean, make a waste and a desolation of what was the Past. Then and only then can we create the True Civilisation."

For a moment an oppressive silence fell upon the animated and happy little group. Then the dwarf spoke, his eyes protruding with fear.

"Shhuuuuuuut! You must never speak of the Sultan in

[1] Maulana Jalal-ad Din Rumi, the Sufic poet of Persia, who founded the Orders of Mevlevi Dervishes.

that way! They will skin us alive, fill our hides with straw and hang us in the sun to dry!"

Tewfik scratched his head thoughtfully. "Don't worry for I know what it means to expose the manners of those in power. It is best to leave those people alone. I want to live and die in Istanbul--near my little daughter."

His voice nearly broke. He was thinking of the long ago, and his imprisonment before he had been exiled. He shuddered. Through the open door he could see Rabia's face as she passed by, carrying glasses and dishes.

"I am protected by the great of the land," he repeated. "I am a poor and ignorant man. For such as I, the only thing to do is to pray for the great in the prologue and the epilogue of each show."

But such is the force of habit in a man of talent that in his mind he was already producing scenes from Gallipoli, scenes which depicted Zati Bey as the drunken hero. What a wonderful paper figure the Bey would make! Still, it was no good to think of that, for he, Tewfik, had determined to remain a grocer, and to sell cheese and other smelly articles.

Two months later the owner of the big coffee-house of Kaba-Sakal called on Tewfik. He had enlarged his coffee-house, painted it a mahogany brown, and covered the seats with lovely red plush. Would Tewfik undertake to tell, or rather act stories, once a week, any evening he might choose? A light shone in Tewfik's eyes. He gulped. The man felt sure of an eager "yes." But suddenly Tewfik's eyes grew dim. He shook his head. "No," he said, in his most determined accents.

A week later the man called again. He offered Tewfik the opportunity of giving shadow-plays two nights a week, for the children in his establishment. This was the hand of Fate. It looked like Destiny.

"Yes," said Tewfik.

19

TWO years passed by. Rabia was thirteen. The *dramatis personae* of the life-play were the same. Rabia remained the central figure, yet she went coolly about her work. In spite of her long-suppressed desire for freedom, which formed a sort of powder-magazine within her young mind, she showed an unexpected restraint and gravity. Her responsibilities she accepted in the spirit of play, but play of an undemonstrative kind. Her public career and her lessons were the serious part of her life, and they stirred in her emotions and thoughts which she could neither analyse nor express. On the whole she was gayer and happier. Upon the deeply graven lines at the corners of her mouth, and the furrows between her eyebrows, which she had acquired early in life, a new personality was being superimposed. It expressed itself in a fine tracery of laughter round the honey-gold eyes, and in the light that moved in their depths. They sparkled when she laughed; the mobile tracery at the corners of her eyes deepened, and a fascinating crinkle formed on her nose. In moments when she abandoned herself to joy and merriment the old landmarks of suffering and suppression were smoothed away, but when she paused to think of the past the lines of suffering would return. This combination of brooding melancholy and joy on so young a face gave it an unusual charm.

Two men in Rabia's *entourage* still pondered over the intricate puzzle of the girl's personality. Each coveted her soul in a different way. Peregrini, the analytical, tormented mind, guessed pretty clearly at some of the contradictory forces which made her what she was. The puritanical

tendency, the readiness to think and take a definite decision, were due to her rigid early training. The Imam and Emineh were in her. Like Emineh, she might easily conceive hatreds which would be incurable obsessions. Yet she had inherited from Tewfik other qualities which had made her a distinct and original personality. The Imam's and Emineh's best efforts to desiccate her heart, to starve it to death, had failed. She had an intense capacity for attachment to human beings. He himself was among the few to whom she seemed deeply attached. It gave him a thrill to note that his flashes of brilliance in manner and talk excited her. He had a curious way, every now and then, of making her restless, of disturbing her youthful pose. She seemed to be playing a perpetual hide-and-seek with him. She evidently wanted to hide herself from him, yet she wanted him to be constantly occupied with her. And he made constant efforts to keep her attention. He drew her into the conversation, composed and played for her, made her stand by the piano, so that he could see on her face the effect of his music.

In Vehbi Effendi's interest, on the other hand, there was no such obsession, no such effort to monopolise Rabia's attention. He had perceived as clearly as the Italian the dual nature of the girl. But he also knew that human nature was sometimes a thousandfold. He had really adopted her spiritually. He meant to guide her throughout life. None of her faculties should be thwarted. Rabia's extreme puritanism, as well as her infinite capacity of abandoning herself to the dictates of her heart, was a precious human quality. She could steer her way through . . she must be trusted to do so, for she was profoundly intelligent, the sanity of her mind was remarkable. Even at her tender age, she judged clearly and decided justly.

In the meantime Peregrini's struggle to capture the girl's imagination did not escape him. He watched it with a

mixture of amusement and anxiety. Because of their common interest in the girl, and also because of the unusual nature of Peregrini himself, Vehbi Effendi was becoming more and more intimate with him. He marvelled at the extraordinary receptivity of the artist, at his power of recreating his impressions in talk and music. But the abstract mind behind all this its acuteness, its ability to detach itself from an emotional personality, was disquieting. Here was the extreme and dangerous intellectuality of the student, the ruthless and logical reasoning which ignored the illogical and unreasonable issues of human nature. This part of Peregrini's nature was to him as a disease It warped his heart, and bred in him a vanity, a cocksureness, which might eventually blind and destroy it. Because of this Vehbi Effendi feared that the man's influence might eventually be dangerous for Rabia. She was, after all, so young and so innocent. Yet Peregrini's intellectual hardness might melt if he should ever be caught in the net of human love, be made to suffer. Was it possible that Rabia, in future years, might be the force that would burn to ashes the satanic intellectual pride of Peregrini? With this thought Vehbi Effendi's watch over Rabia increased. He was sure of his own hold on the girl's mind, and that without making a continual effort, like Peregrini. He soothed her, his words gave her peace and strengthened her character. Vehbi Effendi had no feeling of rivalry with regard to Peregrini: he only meant to guide and protect Rabia. That was all So he thought; but in the meantime the two of them still played with the girl's soul as if it were a ball sent from Heaven for their spiritual or intellectual sport.

Rabia's own reactions to the intense interest she roused in these remarkable men were unconscious. Although strong they remained secondary. The supreme figure which covered the surface of her world and sent its roots down into her

heart was Tewfik. He was a thousand things rolled into one person, a thousand wishes which had been thwarted and suppressed. He was her father and mother, the playmate she had never had, the doll-child whose burning in the fire under the cauldron she still remembered with a pang, the song she had not been allowed to sing, the play and love of which she had been deprived.

With the mothering, the affection, and a certain amount of bullying which Tewfik received from Rabia, he was glad to note that, unlike her mother, she did not interfere with his habits. She waited on him as regularly and efficiently as she waited on the Imam. She brought his drink every evening on a tray laden with salted nuts and olives as carefully as she poured out water for the Imam's ablutions at that hour. She found nothing incongruous in serving him with what was forbidden before she herself went to offer her evening prayers. She prayed five times daily as naturally as she dressed or washed, and fasted the thirty days of Ramazan. There seemed to be no emotion connected with those performances, and she was almost mechanical in the practice of her religion. It was an early habit, and it was a healthy one. She was hardly ever ill.

And there were other people as well whose daily life was affected by the girl. "One walking-stick of forty blind men," Tewfik called her, and it expressed the position she held in the lives of those who surrounded her. Selim Pasha and his wife would not have known how to fill the gap had she deserted them. Without her Tewfik would have ceased to exist. Rakim was her unconditional slave. Hilmi and his friends considered her a vital and organic part of their gatherings. To them she was like a boy friend. That she was a growing maiden, that she was developing disturbing qualities, was realised only by the fair-haired Galib, but he kept his own counsel.

20

"DO you think the Imam will never avenge himself on Rabia for her desertion?" asked Sabiha Hanim of Selim Pasha.

"He has adopted a wait-and-see policy," answered the Pasha. "He will remain quiet as long as he gets the fees from her chanting; but I shouldn't wonder if he were contemplating a stealthy revenge in case the girl ceased to be a source of income."

This was a correct guess as far as the Imam was concerned. Emineh's treatment of Rabia for her desertion was more clear cut. In the presence of Selim Pasha's wife she had repudiated the child declaring that she would henceforth curse her in her five daily prayers until Allah would confound that ungrateful daughter in this world and condemn her to eternal fires in the next. But she followed the girl's new life with intense bitterness and curiosity. Rabia had escaped her more completely than Tewfik; further, Rabia had got hold of Tewfik. Not that Emineh wanted to have him back. Yet if she had ever had a secret hope of his return it had now vanished. Rabia would keep him away from her with a tenacity and temper worthy of Emineh herself.

"What do I care for the filthy money my father gets from the unworthy girl?" murmured Emineh to herself. The prosperity of the shop, which was the result of Rabia's rule, the happy life lived there by the three, had turned Emineh's resentment into burning hatred. She was deprived of everything that made her existence worth while. The last person she could dominate and nag was gone. She longed for sympathetic ears into which she could pour her grievances; but

whenever she opened her lips to harp on her daughter's behaviour the neighbours would remember something left undone and hurry away. Even the Imam refused to listen. He excused himself and went upstairs to his prayers. Emineh, left to her own devices, presently developed the habit of enumerating her wrongs in her loudest tones after she had said her prayers. But here, too, the Imam intervened.

"The neighbours will be asking me to shut you up in an asylum," he growled.

The hatred in her heart was poisoning her system to such an extent that she was actually no longer sane.

In the butcher's shop a young neighbour said to her one day:

"I think Uncle Tewfik is too familiar with Pembeh, the gypsy."

"Oh, that pock-face, that she-clown!" sneered Emineh.

The young woman looked at Emineh with curiosity. Her face, with its small, blinking, unpleasant eyes, had dried up and aged. The worst feature was the mouth . . . straight and thin-lipped, the colour and softness gone from it. The lips were a mere line, like the scar of a wound long healed, a colourless scar that stretched across the face. The young woman wondered what handsome Uncle Tewfik could have found attractive in this repulsive, venomous face.

"Those actors are queer, Auntie Emineh," she said, with cruel significance. "No one can tell to whom they will take. I shouldn't be surprised if he married the gypsy."

That evening Emineh sat for hours poking the brazier. The charcoal turned into grey ash, but she went on stirring the cinders. Early on the following morning she passed through the street of the Sinekli-Bakkal and peered into the shop. The place was festive with paper ornaments, and had an air of prosperity. Rabia sat at the counter, doing the

accounts and looking every inch the owner of the business. Emineh had a sense of having been wronged, driven out of something which had been hers—and by her own daughter.

"So you are giving yourself airs!" she cried, walking into the shop.

Rabia was startled to hear the familiar voice. An old fear knocked on her heart, draining her face of its natural colour. Emineh spoke again:

"You needn't be so stuck-up. Why do you stare at your own mother in that cold way? Your father is going to marry the gypsy woman, and then she will rule the shop and you will be driven away from the place."

To Rabia the idea of her father marrying again was far from pleasant, but Emineh's sneer was still more insufferable.

"What is it to you? Do you want to marry him yourself?" she said angrily.

"Me . . . marry that swine? Why, he whined like a hungry dog under my window for years . . . but he got only a jug of dirty cold water."

"You are as hard as stone!" Rabia's eyes blazed. "My father will never look at you, not even out of the corner of his eye."

"Don't be so sure!" jeered Emineh. Pulling her veil over her face, she suddenly ran out of the shop, for she had caught sight of the young woman who had told her of Pembeh. She must not be seen in Tewfik's shop; but she wondered what Tewfik would do when he heard of her visit. He might come and haunt her door again. What a revenge that would be!

Meanwhile the dwarf, who had wisely stayed in the kitchen when he recognised Emineh's voice, was advising Rabia not to tell Tewfik of the visit. Rakim understood human frailty; he knew Tewfik better than he did anyone

else. Rabia, like the woman in the making that she was, understood, and Tewfik was not told.

Winter passed, and early spring came, but Tewfik did not haunt Emineh's door. She became gloomier and more irritable. She was feeling ill, and often held her side as if conscious of pain. Her face, too, had lost whatever colour it had. Two old women among the neighbours noticed that she was looking very unwell and spoke to the Imam. Would it not be advisable to attempt a reconciliation between the mother and daughter? The Imam was indignant. He opened the door of his office and told the women to go, but they went from him to Tewfik. They told him of Emineh's sickly appearance; they asked him to send Rabia to kiss her mother's hand. He looked distressed, and for once, in spite of Rabia's unwillingness, he made her go. The elderly women accompanied her.

Emineh was sitting in a corner, telling her rosaries and looking extremely haggard. Her mouth made a bluish line across her face. The sight of Rabia proved disturbing to her. Opening that bluish line of dry lips, she poured out the most abusive language that the girl had ever heard. The sting of this sudden humiliation prevented her from observing how very ill her mother looked. She left the house hurriedly, closing her mind to everything human and tender, remembering only those ghastly episodes of the past which the house and Emineh had evoked.

"She hates us," she almost shouted to Tewfik, who, to her further exasperation, was eagerly waiting for her news. "I hate her too," she added, bursting into tears. It was the last interview between the mother and daughter.

21

SELIM PASHA'S gardener, Bairam Aga, felt that the time was at hand when he must begin to train someone to take his place. He was over sixty. Very thin and tall, his thighs moved in their sockets as easily as well-oiled doors on their hinges. His slender limbs were elastic as ever; he could swing his arms to throw stones at the crows in the vegetable garden with the lightness of any boy, and his feet were as springy as those of a tiger cub.

Bairam Aga walked in the street with the slow dignity of a Grand Vizier, but in the garden he was as frisky as a lamb. His face was as wrinkled as fine tanned leather, but behind the white lashes the blue eyes shone with a noble savagery. His teeth gleamed white and sharp; his beard was round and full, his moustache carefully trimmed. He had a short nose, and the raising of his short upper lip gave him a snarling expression. His long red girdle was wound round his body from the waist to the level of his armpits. He was hale and as hearty as any young man; nevertheless he must have a successor, and he must choose one who would be under his thumb until he retired, one to whom he might confide the intricate secrets of gardening. He loved the garden he had created with a surpassingly jealous passion. He wanted to leave his position to someone in his own family. Who better should succeed him more fitly than his nephew Bilal—since his own children were girls?

A letter dictated to a public letter-writer in the courtyard of the Bayazit Mosque brought the fifteen-year-old nephew to Istanbul. He was at once given his place as the youngest member of Selim Pasha's domestic staff.

The boy was a youthful copy of Bairam Aga. The short blue trousers hid a pair of elastic thighs; the feet were even springier and more feline. The long red girdle was wound around a straight lean trunk, and the blue tassel of the red fez fell with an air over his left shoulder. He had the same cold blue eyes and whitish lashes, but his nose was his own —long, hooked, and forcibly curved at the nostrils, while his mouth was tight as a rat-trap. Instead of the dogged snarl of the uncle he had the proud air of a hawk.

Since he was young the other servants tried to order him about; but he was reserved and proud in the best barbarian style, and refused to run their errands. Should his seniors try to kick or hit him he was off in a flash. In his anger he had a tigerish expression.

"I will show you all," he would hiss from behind a tree, or from some impossibly high branch, and his tormentors would quail before the dry glitter of those cold blue eyes behind their whitish veil of lashes.

The scullion thought it scandalous that he should have to fetch well-water, as long as there was a boy to do it for him, a boy who loafed about in the kitchen garden, swinging his idle arms. He ran after Bilal therefore, brandishing an empty saucepan, but the boy was the swifter. He sprang like a hunted fox through the box-hedge and the fruit-garden into a rose-alley, where he nearly collided with a tall man wearing a white night-cap and a Damascene gown. It was Selim Pasha. He was enjoying his roses and breathing the morning air after his early prayers.

"What is this? What is this?" thundered the Pasha as the scullion, still flourishing his empty saucepan, followed the boy. The man began to accuse Bilal. He was lazy, he refused to help.

"Who is the boy?" asked the Pasha.

"Bairam Aga's nephew, sir. newly arrived from Rumelia

to learn gardening under his uncle. He has refused to draw water from the well, and the head cook needs a lot for washing up."

"Who are you?"

"The cook's help, sir."

"Then go and draw the water for the kitchen—at once!"

The man disappeared. The Pasha looked at the boy, who stood, flattened against a tree, biting his nails. He liked the proud air, the haughtiness of the blond head, the bronzed, freckled face, and the strange eyes.

"Wouldn't you rather be an officer or official instead of a gardener?"

"Certainly, sir." Bilal's face lighted up as he said to himself: "Now I will show them all!"

"Tell your uncle to remind me some time at the end of the summer; I will send you to a suitable school."

The matter was closed. The Pasha turned his back to the boy and walked away.

This episode relieved Bilal from the importunities of the servants, but it rendered his life monotonous. After his short hours of labour with his uncle, since he had nothing to do, he took to wandering in the streets in quest of a playfellow. The boys playing in the street of Sinekli-Bakkal would not let him join them, for he dressed differently, looked provincial, and had a strange accent. The older boys snubbed him, the younger imitated his accent. They were even more unkind to him than the servants had been.

"I will show you all!" he shouted at the big boys, who, to his lasting shame, were able to beat him when he fought them. He was, after all, only one against many. Nevertheless, that he was not able to hold his own gave him a bitter sense of defeat which was increased when the smaller boys mocked him with: "I-will-show-you-all is coming, I-will-show-you-all is coming!"

During his wanderings he discovered the grocer's shop. Early one morning he stood before it, trying to read the placard. The colour and the happy arrangement of the goods displayed in the shop-front delighted him. Sacks of beans, rice, sugar, and soap, baskets of grapes, green water melons, their hearts slit with a knife to show their luscious quality, dried fruit of all kinds piled fancifully in the small windows! He longed to go in and buy something but he did not dare. He had occasionally seen the small hand of a girl thrust out a huge brush made of long narrow strips of white paper in order to drive away the flies. Bilal was interested, and stood in the middle of the street and watched.

A patter of clogs . . . some little boys and girls with satchels containing school-books had stopped in front of the shop. The girl grocer came out to serve them. She was a leggy girl, tall for her age. Though dressed like the rest of the school-going crowd, there was a general trimness and personal smartness about her. He stared at the long tidily plaited hair, five braids in all, and falling below her waist. In the early light the dark chestnut braids shone like burnished gold.

The honey-gold eyes, speckled with greyish, greenish dots, hardly glanced at him. She had a way of raising her eyebrows that was attractive, and her thin hands moved deftly as she handed each small customer his purchase. Then Bilal caught sight of a barefooted boy, a mere baby, who had sneaked behind the school-children and was filching a piece of sugar. Springing forward, he squeezed the little boy's wrist to make him drop what he had stolen. The child howled with pain, and a hostile shout was raised by the school-children. They were all ready to tear Bilal to pieces.

"Thou dirty Rumelian!"

"Thou swine!"

"Should I have let that bastard of a pig steal the sugar?" Bilal defended himself.

By now the women around the fountain, a few passers-by, the innumerable dogs—the puppies yelping shrilly, the veteran dogs uttering a thunderous growl—had joined the fray. Rabia pulled the little thief towards her, her eyes gazing deeply into his, and forced a confession.

"Did you or did you not steal?"

The culprit blinked, gulped, and finally broke down.

"I did, Rabia Abla," and overwhelmed, he emitted a heart-rending howl. It brought his mother to his side.

"The daughter of the clown is casting a spell on my boy!" she wailed. "He never steals! Here is your ten paras, you slut!"

"Take your dirty coin back, you street-broom!" Rabia's eyes had narrowed into two long slits, her mouth ominously curved.

The woman hurried away, dragging the boy. Women were trying to hold Rabia back. The school-children had stampeded; a few girls were slily spitting words at Bilal. From the shape their lips assumed he knew they were saying: "Thou dirty Rumelian . . ."

Granny Zehra was addressing Rabia from her window opposite the shop.

"My lamb, my sugar, you need not break your heart over that hussy! I will tell the world how and where and from whom she has obtained her bastard. He is a thief, he filches my prunes, and ties cans to the tail of my cat. . ."

Bilal watched the grocer girl arrange the sacks, and saw that her hands were shaking. He felt tortured yet sheepish. Ignoring the fact that the trouble had come because he had tried to protect her interests, she was brooding over the insult which had been flung at her father. The boy had provoked them. Suddenly she turned on him.

"What is thy name, boy?"

"Bilal."

"Get thee gone to Hell!"

The blue eyes behind the white lashes flashed. She picked up a stone from the pavement.

"I will break thy pate if thou starest at me like a stray ox in a field!"

He walked away with an impudent swing of his long arms. In his mind's eye he saw hosts of girl-faces in white muslin jeering at him, spitting at him. Over them Rabia loomed, stone in hand, shooing him away as if he had been a dog. Why should they insult him and spit at him because he was a Rumelian? He hated Rabia, he hated Istanbul, and the mere geographical term, "Rumelia," began to acquire for him a sacred significance. Its honour was to be vindicated.

"I will show them all!" he said between clenched teeth. Nevertheless, he dared the collective mockery of Sinekli-Bakkal by lingering in the neighbourhood of the shop. He returned again and again. Rabia, noting this, felt irritated. She thought she hated the boy. She made sarcastic remarks about him. Only once did she address him kindly, and that was because Bilal was looking lonely. Neither knew as yet of the other's connection with the Konak.

Late one afternoon Rabia went into the rose-garden in quest of roses for Sabiha Hanim. To her surprise, Bilal was trimming the bushes.

"What are you doing here?" she asked haughtily.

"What are you doing here?" he answered, sucking his thumb, which he had pricked in his shock at seeing her enter.

"Where is Bairam Aga? The lady wants roses," she ordered, so obviously at home that it dawned on him that she might perhaps be the marvellous Koran-chanter who was so often mentioned in the servants' hall.

He cut the roses for the lady and made them into a loose bouquet as he had seen his uncle do. Selecting a single yellow rose, he offered it to Rabia, blushing as he held it out. To spite him she might have thrown the rose away, and even trampled it under her feet, but she had a weakness for yellow roses. She smelt it, and looked at him kindly.

"Next time you are in our street come in, and I will give you some sweets," she said.

22

ALL these years the world was showing Tewfik its sunny side. In the coffee-house of Kaba Sakal he had stretched a white curtain and lighted his torches, and there he produced his shadow-play.

His shows began with the traditional prayer to His Majesty – that his days might last for ever, his sword be ever sharp, and his enemies be confounded. That they might turn into black earth and be eaten by worms. But the heroes of the old-time shadow-play were made by Tewfik to resemble contemporary figures. Some even suggested the much-talked-of royal favourites. In earlier shadow-plays the "Heir to Millions"—the most important character—had been represented as an insipid youth, exploited and fleeced by flatterers, and dying in want. But Tewfik's "Heir to Millions" was a vigorous, shrewd, unscrupulous grandee, a past-master in extortion and bribery, living in luxury. He might have been a paper model of Zati Bey, once the Governor of Gallipoli, and now the profligate Minister of the Interior. Tewfik's interpretation of every ancient character, from the "Albanian Bully" to the Negro Eunuch, suggested the Sultan's *entourage*. But he presented them in such impossible situations that his audience held their breath, trying to guess, yet not arriving at a definite conclusion, as to their identity.

Tewfik reproduced the lives of the humble with merciless realism—their cynical acquiescence, their abject flattery of the great to their faces, their acrid criticism the moment they were among themselves, their passive revolt. "Black-Eye," the central figure of the shadow-play, was a master-

piece of good-humour and slyness. Flattering, humble, sincerely indulgent, swallowing blows and humiliations with the philosophy of the practical mind who sees no other alternative—he might have been Tewfik himself entertaining Ziaï Bey during his Gallipoli days.

The patrons of the coffee-house, through the intermediary of the proprietor, prevailed upon Tewfik to tell, or rather to act, stories on other nights. His story-telling eventually became even more popular than his shadow-plays. He was once more in demand as the most-sought-after entertainer on important occasions. A number of well-known writers proposed to put his stories into literary and dramatic form, but he shook his head. He could act only his own dialogue and in his own way.

The street by the coffee-house of Kaba-Sakal was lined with private carriages on the evenings when Tewfik was acting. He would have been a rich man if generosity had not been a disease with him. He lent money to his cronies, he lent money to the needy in Sinekli-Bakkal, he lent it knowing very well that he would never see it again. Also he was unbusinesslike and timid when he had to collect his fees.

During this time he hardly occupied himself at all with the shop. His evenings were spent in acting, and he got up late in the morning. The afternoons he gave to creating and rehearsing his stories.

Rabia and Rakim basked in the sunshine of his popularity. She had given up her lessons at the Konak, partly because there was not much more to teach her, partly because she was helping Rakim with the shop. Her music lessons continued, though they were more like concerts than lessons.

And she was fifteen. She was keenly conscious of her growth. It had become something more than a lengthening of her legs. She was conscious of herself as something dis-

turbing, something apart from the world in which she lived. Taller than the other girls of her age, less bashful, and of a more balanced mind, she walked the streets as if she had been a young cypress turned by magic into a pretty girl. So thought and said the old women, and so thought the youths of the quarter.

When Rabia had reached the age and station which made it necessary for her to adopt the street costume of a woman, she chose the dress which the working women wore—a long loose black gown with wide sleeves, not very different from her grandfather's clerical coat. A length of thick white calico covered her head, its edges falling below her waist over her gown. She also wore a veil, a black one, but she threw it back, for she could not endure it over her face. She must have air, she must see the life of the streets. Didn't working women go without a veil?

At this period of her life she was a little more bronzed than she had been as a child, and her eyes were more dominating. The fullness of Rabia's life, the inner satisfaction it gave her, were smoothing out the painful lines, relaxing the tautness of her big and pleasant mouth. She was good to look at. Daring young men thought of her with longing . . . a girl ripe for marriage, therefore a girl with whom a fellow might attempt to flirt. But her semi-religious quality as a Koran-chanter, her lack of feminine wiles, the straightforwardness and independence of her character, and above all her quick retorts and fearless sallies, sheltered her from more seriously amorous enterprises.

At that age any other girl would have been a matter of communal concern. The old women would have busied themselves arranging a suitable marriage. In Rabia's case, because of her responsibility as the head of the shop and of the family—for no one thought of Tewfik as the head of the family—and partly because of her learning and unusual

talents, the old women were at a loss how to match her with the youths of her class? The men growled among themselves. That manly daughter of Tewfik had to be married, but who would venture to become the lord and master of such a masterful creature? He would have to be a strong man, the manliest of the manly, who should attempt such a venture.

The members of the fire squadron of the Sinekli-Bakkal discussed this local problem at the small coffee-house in the street. Mr Big-Brother Sabit, listening, declared that any bachelor with the tiniest spark of manhood would at once marry and tame the girl. She was a gauntlet thrown in the face of every bachelor. She sat on the top of the world, a heroine in man's armour! The time had come to bring down her pride, to reduce her to darning a man's socks and rocking the cradle of his son.

A newly initiated youth, desirous of establishing a record for courage, challenged Mr Big-Brother.

"Why don't you do it yourself? You are a bachelor, and the chief of the Braves."

Mr Big-Brother spat into the palms of his hands and rubbed them together lustily He felt like a wrestler before a match for the championship.

"I shall go into her shop to-morrow afternoon and show myself; the rest will be easy."

"We will wait in the street to see what happens," said his followers.

Mr Big-Brother Sabit was the chief of the local fire squadron, to which organisation all the desperadoes belonged, and sometimes even men of more ordinary views and valour. After all, fires were frequent and had to be put out, and every quarter had its fire squadron. The squadron of the Sinekli-Bakkal had been organised by Mr Big-Brother, and because of his zeal and ability he had become its chief.

It was he who had bought the small hand-pump with the public funds entrusted to him. Whenever the Fire Tower of Bayazit gave the signal that there was a fire, whenever the Tower's runner with the red jacket and the red lantern reached the Sinekli-Bakkal, yelling the name of the district and the street of the fire, the valiant fire squadron of Mr Big-Brother got to their feet. They donned their sleeveless crimson flannel jumpers and their knitted caps, pulled on their sandals, and shouldered the pump. They set off at a run, giving the particular blood-curdling yell of the quarter.

Mr Big-Brother's team could outrun any other, could surpass them all in the picturesqueness of their yells. Men in crimson uniforms would run in front with their red lanterns, others in the same garb would bring up the rear, and all would cluster round the pump like chickens about a hen. Mr Big-Brother rode on a black horse in front of the procession, as did all self-respecting chiefs. Like other semi-pioneering associations of a purely masculine character they had their wild and seamy side, but they had also an unwritten code of conduct.

Early the following afternoon a number of young bullies strolled down the street to watch Mr Big-Brother enter the grocer's shop. At that hour custom was slack, and Rabia was alone. The young chief swaggered into the shop, but Rabia was making up her accounts, and hardly looked up. Over his left brow was a deep cut, a scar of which he was proud. Hoping the sight of it would impress her, he pushed back his little black fez. The red kerchief wound around the fez fell at rakish angles over his shoulders. His mouth was slightly crooked, artificially fixed in that position, the position of being about to utter a war-cry. His arms, at an angle of forty-five degrees with his body, swung slowly as he walked.

He could spit backwards through the curve of his elbow a distance of two yards, and very slowly wipe his moustache on his sleeve . . . two of the gestures most coveted by the new members of his brigade. This compound gesture was a signal; it showed that Mr Big-Brother meant business.

Rabia noticed the spitting and the wiping, and also realised that the shop smelt of *raki*; Mr Big-Brother had taken a drink to give himself courage.

"Look here, Rabia Abla, listen to me," he began, nettled by her absorption in her work.

"I hear you all right, I am not deaf; I see you all right, I am not blind," she answered tersely.

His eyes, reddened by drink, opened; he spat backwards and raised a shoulder.

"Do you know who I am? Do you know what I can do to people?"

"Let me see? You are the chief of all the toughs. . . . You blackened your sister's eyes, you also broke her arm. You frighten women at the fountain. I dare say you tread on helpless puppies and crush them. Anything else?"

Her golden eyes sized him up. He was taken aback; his quick ears had detected a sound in the street. His gang would be listening.

"I could make a morsel of you and swallow you," he threatened, his mouth a little more crooked.

"Could you?" She swooped down on him from the counter. In an instant she was whirling about him like a tornado. Her eyes scorched him with their greenish flashes.

"You are twice as big as I am," she was shouting. "You bully of children and puppies . . . you coward! Here, see, I spit in your face and dare you to touch me! There is no one about yet, and I am not afraid!"

Her lips were compressed, fury blazed in her eyes, and she actually spat three times.

He recoiled. The fumes of *raki* were clearing away. He was afraid. He could hear the men in the coffee-house saying that he, the brave man of the quarter, had molested a lonely girl. He spoke anxiously, stammering:

"*Softly, softly, Rabia Abla. I did not mean to touch you. A big fellow like me does not touch an unprotected girl. . . . May I be a dog if I ever thought of such a thing! I will cut the throat of anyone who dares to so much as touch the hem of your garment! I will eat him raw! I am your Big-Brother, your protector . . . I swear by our pump. . . .*" And he emitted the yell of his team. " 'The raiser of dust, the breaker of hearts!' "

It echoed through the street, and immediately she was beside herself with rage and indignation.

"Stop that nasty yelling, you brute, you cur! Get out of my shop! I can put you and such as you in your place. I don't need your protection! Get out . . . to the bottom of Hell . . . at once. . . ."

Her voice was rising, and she was like a whirlwind as she sought for something that she might throw at his head.

He left the shop hastily and his friends at once rushed up to him.

"Let us get out of this street," he ordered, and as soon as they had turned the corner they questioned him.

"She is ten times Tewfik's size in courage. There is no man in the world worthy to clean her shoes!" he declared ecstatically. Then, looking at his friends with his most commanding air, he added: "Anyone who dares to worry her will have to reckon with me!"

His tone was unmistakable, and he spat back to confirm his words. All his acolytes spat back crying.

"Viva Rabia Abla. . . ."

"Shuuuur, quiet as a mouse in the neighbourhood, do you hear?"

And the youth of the fire brigade did walk on tiptoe and behave in Rabia's street. Mr Big-Brother was ready to fight seven dragons for her sake. When they met in the street he looked at her pleadingly, but she passed him as if he had been a total stranger. In her heart, however, she was thinking that she would make it up with him at Bairam, when the Moslems forgive one another. She liked him.

23

"SOVEREIGNS are like nations . . . they have short memories," Selim Pasha said to himself.

He was having a hard time. To hold his own against the new Minister of the Interior was proving difficult. He had served the Sultan as faithfully as ever, but he received less thanks. The red purses had disappeared from the Friday ceremonies, and in consequence it had become almost impossible to maintain his establishment in its old brilliance. Some of his personal property, inherited from a line of prosperous ancestors, had already been sold. He had reduced his son's allowance and cut down Durnev's expenses. However, his wife must have her personal carriage and live in the way to which she had been accustomed. His power to imprison and to exile might have provided him with easy money, but his code would not permit him to take it, and anyone who, guessing at the state of affairs, offered him a disguised bribe lived to regret it.

The only escape from his worries were the evenings spent in his wife's room. She was always gay, and Rabia added greatly to the pleasantness of those peaceful hours. He liked to hear the girl talk. And there was sound sense in that young head. She remained a clean-cut, comely creature, with the unconscious winsomeness of a rose-bush. He took pleasure in the sobriety of the tightly-plaited hair and the clean skin, which was innocent of make-up. The reed-like, boyish narrowness of the hips, the fragile shoulders, the subtle rotundity and swell of the virgin breasts pleased the eye without obsessing it. She had grown up without that air of flaunting her sex which had been so flagrant in the rest

of his household. Above all she amused him, telling the latest gossip of the Sinekli-Bakkal. In her comments she could approach the borderline of impertinence, but she never overstepped it.

"Don't you think the time has come for you to retire from the shop?" he asked her one evening, after watching her for some time with quizzically raised brows.

"I couldn't, Pasha Effendi. Tewfik is away most of the time, and Rakim has to buy provisions from the market and deliver goods," she answered, sighing; then, suddenly, she asked in a sharp tone: "Why do you want me to leave the shop?"

"Well, you are growing up, little Abla . . . and you are not ugly, not exactly. I suppose all sorts and conditions of people come into the shop."

"Nonsense!" said Sabiha Hanim. "Don't you see that the child is able to cope with the wildest of them? Why, she is a perfect spitfire when she is angry!"

"You ought to have seen me handle Mr Big-Brother," Rabia said. Instantly she was on her feet, imitating Mr Big-Brother's swagger. She had tied the Pasha's snuff handkerchief around her head, letting the ends fall down on her shoulders. She walked up and down the room with an impudent swing, her arms akimbo.

When she sat down, and returned the snuff handkerchief, the Pasha studied her with a puzzled light in his grey eyes. The courage of the girl disturbed him. He himself was a man who had stood between the rough world and his women. He had provided for them and protected them. His sex and his religion demanded it. But this chip of a girl was standing between the world and her menfolk.

"It is time that someone looked after you a bit. You work for your people, you slave for them. Even the old Imam lives on you." His voice became very stern. "Where are they

when brutes enter the shop to molest you? The day is coming when you will be asked in marriage. You will be obliged to have a man to look after you. Do you ever think of that?"

"I do," she laughed, with the fascinating crinkle on her nose. "But I am like a broomstick. I have too long a nose. No one will want to marry me. Tewfik says that I will be an old maid."

"One of these days Tewfik himself may marry."

"Never," she said with fervour. "Pembeh tried to catch him, but I told her that I would scratch her eyes out if she did—it is easier to frighten her than Tewfik."

"Why do you want everyone to marry, Pasha?" Sabiha Hanim scolded. "The girl is better unmarried. Who would entertain me in the evenings? Who would sing away your worries? Besides, a husband would be only another charge. She would treat him, too, as a babe in arms."

The conversation suggested to Rabia that people about her had realised the change in her. She was becoming a woman.

The evening after her conversation with the old couple she was in Hilmi's room with her father and Rakim. Peregrini was playing an air of haunting wistfulness. She stood by the piano as usual. Vaguely he was realising that the sleek head which four years ago was so far below the piano was now far above it. A strange pang almost stopped the swift movement of his fingers. His eyes became intent, and he noted that Rabia's delicate cheeks were the colour of old wine. The impersonal emotion which connected him with Rabia had all of a sudden become painfully personal. She, too, felt some disturbance, for she let her lashes fall and cover her eyes. The old tie was broken. There was something new in their relation. She felt that Peregrini, too, had discovered the fact of her growth. Something within her took to flight—ashamed and almost terror-stricken. She was

like Adam in Paradise, when for the first time he became conscious of himself and was filled with shame before the Lord, because of his nakedness.

Peregrini dropped his hands on his knees.

Vehbi Effendi walked towards the piano and put his hand on Peregrini's shoulder. The sudden break in his playing, and perhaps the change of expression on the girl's face, had drawn the Dervish to that disturbing corner of the room.

"I was noting Rabia Hanim's height. Her head used to be there when I first saw her; now . . ." Peregrini stopped. He had begun in a matter-of-fact voice, but Rabia's eyes, flashing into his, affected him again in the disquieting way of a minute ago.

"Life passes from stage to stage," Vehbi Effendi was saying in his impersonal tone.

Hilmi joined them and remarked in his wistful manner:

"She will soon be going behind the veil. Wretched old custom! To think it will deprive us of our Rabia Abla! . . ."

"I don't see why," she was saying almost angrily "I am brought into face-to-face contact with men at the shop, and I chant to hordes of strange men in the mosque "

"That happens in the exercise of your profession, my rose, either that of a Koran-chanter or that of a grocer," the dwarf remarked in his squeaky voice.

"Well then, I will chant a passage from the Koran each time I come to Hilmi Bey's room!"

It was evident that she didn't want to leave them Hilmi patted her arm in his brotherly way. Yet there was an uncomfortable silence in the room. It flattered and disturbed her They would miss her enormously if she ever withdrew from their society. But why was she so upset at the idea of not coming to Hilmi's room? The dark Shevki meant nothing to her, neither did the fair Galib. Hilmi she would always see, for he was always wandering into his mother's

room. Vehbi Effendi's position was unassailable, for he was her teacher; further, no woman really veiled herself from him. The only person she might not see would be Peregrini. They had no common ground on which to meet. She looked at him in perplexity. The sense of loss was marked on his face, and his black eyes were turned to Tewfik.

"Will you veil your daughter from me one day, Tewfik?"

"She will do as she pleases," Tewfik answered, but he, too, was thinking. It was obvious that the girl must separate herself from this company of men. The time had come, and it was passing. He himself must take a decision How he hated taking any decision . . . he had never taken one. Better forget it or postpone it.

"Father," Rabia was saying in a solemn tone, "I mean to see the Signor always. . . ."

Well, now, this was strange. Would she rebel against tradition in his case? She who was such a typically Moslem girl. . . .

The episode fixed Rabia's thoughts on Peregrini for a time. It was partly because the man was so deeply conscious of her, and partly because he was more alive than the others . . . and also different from them all. She thought of him as an undiscovered world. She could invoke his reality during his absence, could see the way his face changed at lightning speed, the burning glow in his eyes—a glance that went through her. And his hands . . . the hands without the man himself. They lived; she could see them like two separate living things. Small, hard, wrinkled. with flat fingers . . . capable hands, forceful hands. They had a satanic and flashing vivacity.

She gradually was pulling herself out of the emotional shock of that evening. She thought less of him, but whenever she did think of him the vision quickened her pulses and brought colour to her cheeks. The reason for it all she

didn't try to fathom. But it was lurking below her conscious mind.

"Hanim Effendi, what happens if a Moslem girl marries a Christian?"

"What a question! Nothing happens, for no such thing ever takes place; it is against the law."

"But what happens if anyone marries a Christian in spite of the law?" the girl insisted, knitting her brows.

"I suppose the people in her street would stone her and her Christian lover to death. It is one of the unbreakable laws, Rabia."

"But Moslem men marry Christian women. . . ."

"Oh, child, men are different, didn't you know?"

"But what must a Moslem girl do if she loves a Christian?" she asked again, in an absurdly serious voice

"Ask the lover to turn Moslem . . . what makes you ask such a question?"

"I don't know," she answered, lost in thought; but it was only a half truth.

24

IT was April, it was St. George's Day. Who would believe that any city under the sun could produce such crowds, such colour, such noise, such riotous living, such fairs, and above all such colossal quantities of roast lamb and pilaff!

Tewfik lolled in bed, thinking lazily to himself:

"That gypsy is probably shaking her belly on a green meadow to the tune of drums and fifes!"

When afternoon came it would be time enough to get up. Deafening, that din of whistles and rattling of toys; disquieting, that hum and buzz of the street—the buzz of a gigantic beehive. But when the sun ceased to scorch the city the noise would subside. Time enough then to get up. He was going to prepare a feast for his friends. He would cook roast lamb and pilaff for Vehbi Effendi and Peregrini. His cooking was as much a finished art as his acting, but he exercised it only on St. George's Day. So he lay in bed, dreaming indolently of a meal in his back garden, of pleasant talk, with the quinces and almonds aflame with their pink and white blossoms under the blue sky.

The guests arrived. Rabia, with sleeves rolled up, and the hem of her print dress lifted on both sides, came to help Tewfik. She could see the cornet-shaped cap of Vehbi Effendi and the grey wavy hair of Peregrini. They were sitting on a mat under the trellis, Vehbi Effendi serene and the Italian excitable as ever. She herself felt restless. The white and pink petals blew into the kitchen. For the first time in her life she felt out of place among her friends.

Including Peregrini, and even her beloved Tewfik, all about her were alien to her thoughts; a void existed between

herself and them. She did not realise that what she felt was Nature knocking at the closed door of her innocence. Was she ignorant of the physical mystery of life? Had she not heard the dark whisperings of the women in the Konak? If she had she did not connect them with her present restlessness. Her ears were registering scraps of conversation. Words and rose-petals were wafted into the kitchen.

"Our songs not gay? Nonsense—you listen to this!" It was Vehbi Effendi, beating his knees and humming Nefi's incomparable "Ode to Spring."

"To my taste that is too sleepy . . . listen to this!" It was Peregrini this time. He sang a bright, saucy Italian song which quivered in the air. It made Rabia swing to its gay lilt. Peregrini's warm voice was crossing the void between her and her elders.

She poured coffee into the tiny cups on the tray, and fixing her eyes on them walked into the garden. Her menfolk were constantly demanding coffee, and she prided herself on serving it without spilling a drop. Her clogs struck the pebbles strewn at the kitchen door, and at the sound the Italian's voice dropped into a sudden silence. Her momentary awareness of Peregrini passed with the notes. Once more she was moving among aliens.

The youthful face framed in that spring setting of blossoms made Vehbi Effendi smile. Peregrini knitted his black brows. The Dervish leaned towards him and said softly:

"Here is a line to suit that picture. . . ." He hummed: "'I shall seek a lad of fifteen, and of him my sweetheart make.'"

The line flashed into Rabia's mind the picture of a young lad, the sort of lad whom a maiden of her age would take for her sweetheart. It was Bilal. He must be more than fifteen now; but what did it matter? She tried to visualise him in his school uniform, and the cups began to shake on

the tray. Rakim called out:

"Take care, you will spill the coffee!"

And spill it she did. Peregrini sprang to her rescue, and on his knees wiped the black stuff from her dress while Rakim took away the tray. She was crimson with shame and rage. The Dervish remained where he was, humming his spring ode, and Tewfik came into the garden. Reaching up to the orange paper lanterns on the trellis, the actor lighted them.

"Gentlemen the roast is ready," he announced, putting the matchbox back into his pocket in his usual leisurely fashion. The traditional moon of Istanbul, the round, luminous silver disk, appeared in the huge inverted purple bowl overhead, the night sky of Istanbul. He went into the kitchen, and returned carrying a big copper tray steaming with roast and pilaff. Rabia's clogs rattled on the pebbles as she walked after him, bringing spoons and plates. They sat round the tray and ate, for a time lost in the enjoyment of the food. With an unaccountable feeling of irritation, she listened to the jaws munching. They were like animals devouring their prey. Rakim's eyes glistened under the orange light, his whole being absorbed in roast and rice.

Rabia ate quickly, and went back into the kitchen, but Rakim followed her, offering to help. She refused in a hard, sharp tone, a tone rare with her. She could almost have kicked him. His maimed body suddenly appeared to her to be monstrous. His eyes, begging for kindness as a dog begs for bones, his fussy insistence on helping . . . he seemed to her insufferable. No one should have that sort of body. That night she was aching for beauty, for strength, for youth. She pushed him out each time he brought in the remnants of the feast. He went away at last, coffee-tray in hand, and she felt relieved at the thought of his drinking coffee and smoking and leaving her in peace.

The others were reclining on the mat. Peregrini watched Rakim, his head on his hands. The strange big eyes, the sad yet comic face. . . . Rakim was sitting with one knee raised. The smoke curled out of his mouth and through his nostrils. He kept his face half-turned towards the kitchen door. Peregrini had an uncanny sensation as if he had entered the body of the dwarf, and was enduring his monstrous pain. The orange light bathed the enormous turban, and the eyes turned towards the kitchen. A figure of romance, created by some tortured and diseased genius.

"He is in love with Rabia, I am sure," thought Peregrini. "She is torturing him by her petulance. What can he want of her, though? Nothing more than the kind looks and pats she gives to the dog at the door. And she? She is probably thinking of some youth of fifteen. . . ." Peregrini ascribed the torture he himself was undergoing to his sympathy for Rakim. "The poor little monster is on the rack—but there is no hope of his ever . . ." He left off thinking and began to hum. Rabia heard the feverish beat of passion in his voice.

Behind the walls were other people—eating, sitting in their back gardens. A man coughed, a baby cooed, a woman raised her voice, calling a tardy member of the family to dinner. A pungent smell of newly watered earth rose in the air. The gardens must have been watered in the evening after the sun had set. The earth-scent was mixed with others —odours of balmy spring flowers, fried vegetables, and roast meat. Confused sounds came from the street . . . it seemed that the street belonged to one country and climate, the back gardens to another . . . you couldn't be the same in both.

"Tok-tok-tok," someone was knocking at the door.

"Who is that?" Rabia called as she pulled the rope to open.

"It is I," answered a husky voice. Pembeh was returning

from the fête. Roses were swinging from behind her ears and veil. She was singing to herself.

"There is company in the garden, Auntie Pembeh," said Rabia. Pembeh shrugged her shoulders and went out; she did not offer to help. Once more laughter was heard, and snatches of gay airs; Pembeh was snapping her fingers in a joyous rhythm.

Again "tok-tok-tok" on the door.

Rabia pulled the rope once more and called:

"Who is that?"

As no one answered, she went through the dimly lighted shop to the door. It was half open. Outside the dog, with her litter of puppies, stood wagging her tail.

"It wasn't you who knocked at the door, was it?" She spoke to the dog, laughing for the first time that night. Someone coughed from behind the door. A nervous, timid cough. . . She pulled her veil over her ears and leaned out. As close as possible to the wall stood a slim shadow, and the voice of a boy in its breaking stage said:

"It is I."

"Who is I?" she inquired with mock seriousness; but she had recognised the voice.

"I am Bilal," the voice continued. "Hilmi Bey has company, and begs Tewfik Effendi and the rest to come to him."

"I will ask him. . . . So you are Bilal?" She was in no hurry to go.

"And you are Rabia Hanim? How you have grown! I hardly recognised you."

He had lost some of his shyness; he even ventured to look at her directly, to look into her eyes, and she met his gaze. The shining, silvery lantern in the purple sky over the sombre street was reflected in those young eyes. Both were excited.

"Let me see your uniform, Bilal," she almost begged, and

without waiting for an answer, her hands, which were still wet and smelt of soap, traced the golden stripes around his throat and along his sleeves.

"Who is there, Rabia?" Tewfik called in a loud voice from within.

"Hilmi Bey wants you all," she called, and went back to her washing.

The company seemed pleased. They were like children on a holiday. But Rabia did not join them in their gaiety. She had a headache, she said, and she wouldn't go with them. She must tidy up and go early to bed. They left her and walked away. Even Pembeh went with them.

Bilal watched them go. He was now back at the door, standing behind it as before. Rabia opened it and Bilal looked hungrily at her face.

"Why do you stay all alone in the street?"

"I don't know . . . What are you doing all alone in there?"

"Tidying up. Oh, the garden smells so good; it is so warm and nice out there!"

No verbal invitation, but the voice was inviting enough. She felt as if someone had come to her from her own world; the old people from the other side of the void had gone away and left her. She walked towards the garden, and he followed. Where was that fierce antagonism with which she had faced him years ago? They two were sitting on the mat looking into each other's face, or up to the moon; caught in the snare of life. What greedy eyes they had! For a moment each seemed to see the other's heart beating. Bilal's could almost be heard, so wildly it throbbed against his tightly buttoned jacket. He got up and walked away, unable to speak. She followed him, and stood before the door. Her hands once more passed over the golden stripes of the uniform, lingeringly, her cheek almost touching the end of his hard collar. He kissed it with icy and tremulous lips.

"It is pretty, this uniform of the Galata-Serai," she sai foolishly; then whispered, "I shall see you next week whe you come from school."

She walked slowly upstairs. She smoothed out her be and lay on it, her eyes on the moonlit ceiling. She had for gotten to say her prayers. Gradually she dozed; she mus have fallen asleep with her eyes still staring at the ceiling Someone kissed her on the lips; she felt a strange, all-pervading physical quiver. She did not see the owner of the lips; she only felt hard hands clutching her frail shoulders. They were Peregrini's hands. She sighed, relaxed and fell into a dreamless sleep.

25

"A VERY nice man wants to marry you, Rabia, and the Pasha is going to speak to Tewfik to-morrow," said Sabiha Hanim.

"Is he a Pasha, a Bey, or a simple soldier?" asked Rabia, in the voice Pembeh assumed when she told fortunes with dry beans.

"I am not joking, Rabia. It is Galib Bey, Hilmi's friend. Why that face, you monkey? He is of good family; his father is a retired official, and he has no mother or sisters. It means that you would be the sole mistress in a big house."

"I don't want to, I don't want to," said Rabia vehemently.

At dinner in the garden that night they noticed that she was looking worried; she showed a tired face, with lines round the eyes.

"What is troubling my sugar daughter?"

"Galib Bey wants to marry me, and the Pasha is going to sound you to-morrow," she answered her father, with disconcerting directness and lack of prudery.

An agony of apprehension contracted Tewfik's face. Was it the necessity for coming to a decision or the idea of losing Rabia? If she married Galib she would have to live in that great house at Kadi-Keuy. He knew the house. She would step up into a higher station. The shadow of a social barrier was added to the damnable shadow of separation! A hell of a place his house would be without Rabia! A hell of a life he would lead without her to warm his heart and light his home!

"What do you say to it, Rabia?"

"I will not marry him," she said with finality. How wonderful, thought he, to know one's mind at that age; how

wonderful to be able to decide in that swift way! Tewfik's admiration for her will-power and quick decision almost surpassed his relief at the nature of that decision. He caught Rakim's eyes glistening and watching them both. There was something very solemn about them.

"What do you say, Rakim? You are her uncle."

"She might do worse than marry Galib Bey."

She shook her fist at him.

"I didn't know you wanted to be rid of me."

He grinned.

"You are a poor maiden with no dowry. I will be your dowry slave, then we need not separate. Galib Bey is a soft young man; he is kind to me, and you would twist him round your little finger. I do not know whether any other husband would have me with you. Why – he might not even allow me to see you."

"You pig, you selfish dwarf!" Tewfik was scolding. "You think only of your crooked little self!"

But Galib was disposed of, and the clouds of marriage darkening their cheerful abode were lifted. The episode automatically determined Rabia's position at the Konak. After this proposal there could be no question of her going into Hilmi's room when he had men visitors. But Peregrini would continue to call, and she would see him. Rabia went to her room singing. As she rolled her sleeves back and took off her stockings, preparing for her ablutions, she was not thinking of Peregrini, but of when she would see Bilal. Curiously enough, though her heart was beating fast she did not think of Bilal as a possible husband. No girl of her age had ever met a youth on sentimental grounds without thinking of marriage. She thought of nothing definite, nothing that had a future bearing in regard to her infatuation for Bilal. It really was the lure of the "lad of fifteen," and nothing else.

On Friday afternoon, when Bilal came from the Galata-Serai, he had to do some planning. He was sure that Rabia would come to see him in the rose-garden. He had therefore flattered his uncle, persuading the old man to leave him in charge. His uncle had laughed at the idea of the boy dealing with bushes and manure-heaps while he was wearing that dandy's uniform. Bilal had to take off his tightly buttoned, elegant jacket, and roll up his sleeves before Bairam Aga would give his consent. He hated to take off his jacket; he had thrilled strangely at her interest in the golden stripes on his sleeves and collar.

She found him cutting and tying, his face bright with anticipation, his long neck bent and his eyes peering through the bushes. She was carried away by his freshness and vigour. Her past irritation at the very sight of him was forgotten. She was enchanted to be near a person of her own age. In an almost formal voice she asked for some roses for her lady, but her eyes were on his, and he saw her mouth twitch at the corners, and her nose crinkling with laughter. Stooping, she tried to help him to tie the flowers, her fingers lingering around his long, cool, freckled hands. As he bent down to get a better view of her face the suppleness of his neck and the smell of his hot skin went to her head. She was thrilled; she wanted to stand there, to watch the boy's blond, comely head. Bilal tried to start a conversation, but he found nothing to say. He felt that he was being as insipid and uncouth as any youth from his village; but of this she was hardly aware. She went away sooner than he expected, smelling the roses, and he felt not only miserable but foolish.

Rabia fascinated Bilal; but not as he fascinated her, in an elemental way. From the time he had entered the great city of Istanbul a part of the awesome mystery of it all had been Rabia's face. She had cast her spell on him from the day he

had seen her serving in the grocer's shop.

During his last year at school he had experimented with life more than a little. His success in athletics gave him a standing among the older group of Rumelian boys. Going about with them, he had met young Jewish and Greek girls. He had even joined in an escapade from a back window; had sat and smoked in the parlour of a Greek lady of doubtful character. By these means he had acquired definite ideas about women. There were two kinds. Those were the young prostitutes of Pera, who pursued men, even boys. They were to be had for money. There were also the virgins: the secluded, mysterious creatures, who fled from you and were never to be captured. You could approach them only after the ceremony of marriage. Rabia belonged to these extraordinary and unattainable virgins. He wanted to marry her. He still smarted at the memory of her superior air, her insults. But he was determined that some day he would dazzle her by his great achievements.

The nightingales in song, the roses in bloom, the silvery moon overhead, the two of them snuggling together in secret in that enchanting garden—and he would tell her of the great future in store for him. Riches, horses, carriages, servants, any number of human beings to serve and to obey him; and he "showing them all . . ." She must understand that he was not an ordinary boy. He was choking with a sense of power, he was brim full, overflowing, with something dangerously dynamic. That absurd boast of his, "I'll show you all!" was significant. Though only one person took him seriously, not once did the boy doubt that he was destined to achieve great things; what he did doubt was whether he would ever wipe away from Rabia's memory the humiliations, the insults he had received as a young servant. More than her kisses he longed to have her honey-gold eyes flash with admiration; to have her listen to his talk with the

humility and the diffidence of an ignorant virgin.

They met again and again, and her fascination for him increased, but he left her always irritated, exasperated, on the verge of despair. She was taking their idyll in a transient and natural way. No thought of the morrow was associated with it. No thought whatever. She was acting in accordance with her instincts—the instincts of a young animal. She moved about him hungrily, longing to rub her flushed cheeks against his uniform. She passed her fingers over his mouth, over the soft down on his lips. This electrified him; at the moment it made him feel powerless, but the remembrance of it shocked him.

"She is acting more like a boy than a girl," he said to himself. He had imagined that a girl would always flutter away from him, like a bird on a branch; her wings would be outstretched all the time to fly at his approach. He did not realise that Rabia's unmaidenly courage was due to her innocence.

When he tried to make an impression on her mind with his visions of a brilliant future, he failed completely. She listened to his detailed description of how he would put fear and wonder into the heart of the world, but she felt no interest. She had grown among people with marked personality and talent, and she tried to tell him of their gifts, their work, only to find that he was more than indifferent. Whether or not she understood the meaning of the talk to which she listened in the Konak and her home, at least she felt that Bilal's chatter was senseless in comparison.

"Vehbi Effendi, Peregrini . . ." she began.

"Hired music masters!" he sneered. "Why should we talk about these fellows? Rakim is a clown; Hilmi Bey and his friends are dandies and empty talkers. . . ." Fortunately he did not mention her father.

"Well then, of whom shall we talk?"

"Selim Pasha," he said, and his eyes brightened. "By the name of Allah, the man is great. He can bastinado anyone he wishes to; he can make the mother of every mortal in the Empire cry. And then, he possesses so many beautiful things . . . well, my wife will have everything his wife has," and he blushed furiously as he looked significantly at Rabia. She did not appear to have grasped his meaning.

"I don't think the Pasha makes people's mothers cry. He is not that sort. He is sweet and affectionate to us all."

"Doesn't he though! What do you know about him? You see him only in the harem, in the company of women. The only thing he lacks is education. Of course, too, he is old-fashioned. If he had the half of my education . . ."

"I believe you are pining to be something like Mr Big-Brother!" she snapped.

The sting of the remark sank into his heart. He smarted to think that she should have likened his talk to the braggadocio of that tough, the head of a local fire squadron. This girl, whom he longed so to impress, made no more of him than the servants had done. It was humiliating. He clenched his fists.

"I will show you one day!"

"Will you?"

She yawned and rose. She was going. This would be their last meeting before the term began, and after that it would be a matter of snatching meetings on a Friday. The garden had lost its verdant warmth. The leaves were dry, the wind cold. Tears came to the boy's eyes. He tried to reach her, tried in the only way he knew. Seizing her slender arms, he kissed her on the lips. Taken by surprise, she nearly lost her head. It was as though the delicate beak of a lovely bird had pecked at her lips The sudden greenish flame in the golden eyes seemed to burn his own.

As she walked away, remembering that this was their last

meeting during the summer holidays, anger rose in her heart.

"Why didn't he do that all the time, instead of talking like the chief bully in a shadow-play?" she cried to herself.

Absorbed by their boy and girl love-affair, they had not imagined that anyone would notice what they were about. But the servants had watched them talking intently to each other among the thick and fragrant bushes of the rose-garden, had even calculated how often they had met. Having a high opinion of Rabia's seriousness, they had imagined Bilal as pursuing her. She, such a fine Koran-chanter, so great a favourite with the Pasha and his lady, so brilliantly successful in everything she did! No woman in the harem, within their remembrance, had achieved such distinction; and in any case an Istanbul girl would be more than a match for that vain Rumelian cock. More: they expected her to teach the boy a lesson that he would remember to the end of his life.

They hinted to Bairam Aga at the possibility of a marriage between Rabia and his nephew; they felt sure that he would move heaven and earth to bring about such a match. To their surprise, however, the contrary was the case. The man's bloodshot eyes bulged out of their sockets with rage. He struck the table of the servants' hall with his fist and swore mightily. His nephew marry the daughter of a clown? A boy with such a destiny as Bilal. . . . If anyone dared mention it again, in or out of his presence, he would hear from Bairam Aga! Well, Bairam Aga came from a land of vendettas, and the other servants were peaceful Anatolians, who had become even more peaceful in the relaxing atmosphere of the city. They said no more.

The old man brooded over what the servants had told him. He at least believed that the boy had a great future before him. Bilal would rise in the world; he might even

become a minister, a second Selim Pasha, and marry the Sultan's daughter. Were there not instances within living memory of such advancement befalling poor boys? The least Bilal could do would be to marry the Pasha's daughter. Why had Selim Pasha taken so much interest in the boy's education, unless he meant to make him his son-in-law? Didn't the Pashas of old buy comely and intelligent slave boys, educate them, and marry them to their daughters—even make them their successors in office? A man's son rarely, if ever, succeeded his father in office. It was ability and strength, good training rather than birth, which raised men to positions of responsibility. With such thoughts as this Bairam Aga marched into Selim Pasha's presence.

The great man was picking snails from his roses. He made a wry face whenever he pulled a snail from a tender leaf, threw it down, and stamped on it. He hated destroying living creatures, he hated killing, he hated violence of any sort outside office hours.

Bairam Aga coughed discreetly and salaamed.

"What is it, Bairam Aga?" The Pasha was in a pleasant mood.

"Something that concerns the honour of your house," said Bairam Aga in a mysterious tone, shaking his head fiercely.

Selim Pasha dropped the snail he was holding, forgot to step on it, and glared. The expression of force and violence that replaced the pleasant smile with which he had greeted the gardener was alarming.

"What do you mean, man?" he thundered.

"No harm has been done as yet," Bairam Aga assured him. "But the flesh is weak; even a Rumelian boy who loves honour more than life may go astray. A young girl and a young boy. . . . Bilal and Rabia Hanim have been meeting each other in the garden. The story of flax and fire. . . ."

Selim Pasha's face relaxed; he spoke in a mild tone:

"Now look here, Bairam Aga, it would be a suitable match. I would give the girl a dowry, and my lady would probably buy her a house."

"God forbid! Rabia Hanim is all right in her own way, but she should marry a humble musician, a grocer, some small trader The boy . . ."

"Who is the boy anyway?" the Pasha roared again.

"Forgive an ignorant old man!" The gardener felt himself on delicate ground. "The Pasha himself has chosen the best school for the boy, the Pasha himself surely has some idea as to a suitable bride for his slave Bilal. I do not mean any offence—but boys such as Bilal have become sons-in-law to Sultans. Pasha Effendi knows that it is no sin to aspire to marry the daughter of a Pasha."

It was clear enough what Bairam Aga wanted. He was asking the hand of the Pasha's daughter for his nephew? Even without the gardener's mysterious nods, Selim Pasha would have grasped his intention. The Pasha, being of the old school, had no objection on the score of the boy's social position. In the eyes of Allah all Moslems were equal, at least for marrying purposes. But he had not given his daughter much thought. She had neither looks nor ability; indeed, he doubted whether anyone would marry her, even on account of his position. She was a good age—over nineteen—nearly an old maid. That handsome Rumelian was too good for her. Rabia would be more suitable for him. Those talks in the garden . . . Selim Pasha frowned.

"Look here, man, if Bilal has courted Rabia Hanim wantonly I will break every bone in his body."

"Allah forbid!" Bairam Aga's face was even sterner than that of Selim Pasha. "No harm has been done yet: otherwise I would cut the boy into a thousand pieces; his own mother wouldn't recognise the bits; the dogs would refuse to eat his remains! I am an old Rumelian, Pasha Effendi. I would

kill my mother, my daughter, my son, even my father for the sake of honour."

"I will investigate the matter," said the Pasha, and he walked away. If that pleasant girl wanted the boy, she should have him, Bairam Aga or no Bairam Aga. If, on the contrary, their talks had had no significance, and she did not care for the boy, why—certainly—he might take the boy as a son-in-law; but Rabia should have the first choice.

In the evening he found Rabia in his wife's room. She was arranging the blanket over the old woman's knees while Pembeh, the gypsy, was telling an entertaining story. At his entrance the girl ran to prepare his usual cushion near the divan and put the ash-try in readiness before it. Her quick movements were full of grace. The five plaits of bright hair swayed right and left.

"She shall have the boy if she fancies him, by Allah!" he said to himself. Then he addressed her point-blank:

"Don't you think Bilal looks handsome in his student's uniform?"

"Handsome enough to be the Sultan's son-in-law," she sneered. The very name of Bilal made her furious that evening. She had been waylaid only an hour ago in the garden by Bairam Aga. The old gardener had lectured her on Bilal's future, and his fitness to be a Sultan's son-in-law; he had hinted at the possibility of a marriage between the boy and the Pasha's daughter. He was warning her off. Rabia had understood that at once, and she was boiling with rage. She recalled Bilal's silly talk, his admiration for Selim Pasha, his longing for pomp and circumstance, servants and carriages. So this was his intention! The strange thrill of his kiss was wearing away; other feelings had come to the surface. The garden was desolate with fallen leaves. It looked as though no nightingale had ever sung there, no moon looked down upon young lovers.

"Is he as important as he thinks himself, Rabia?" The Pasha's brows were quizzically lifted, and his eyes twinkled.

She smiled at him. Looking around she noted that Hilmi had left his fez on the divan. Cocking it on her head, she raised herself on her toes, and with that strange earnestness which characterises all Rumelians, she stared at the company, walking up and down very slowly, talking in Bilal's accents and in his very words. She gave a wonderful parody of the way in which the boy had poured out his dreams. How many servants he would have, how he would bastinado each, how he would make the Sinekli-Bakkal eat dirt when he was in power! And how many people he would exile if he should ever become Minister of Public Security!

Sabiha Hanim laughed. Selim Pasha mused. Here was someone who worshipped him as a hero. It was pleasant to be a hero to a student of Galata-Serai. Modern students generally assumed a superior attitude; they looked down on the old-school official. Absurd as he was, one could recognise the boy's sense of power, his ambition, his vitality. Curious that this chit of a girl should laugh at it all!

"Don't you admire people who have position and power?"

Rabia shrugged her shoulders. Pembeh watched the scene with a mischievous glitter in her black eyes. She had sized up the situation, and guessed Rabia's mixed feelings of attraction and repulsion. A song came to the tip of her tongue, a song which expressed the complicated thoughts of Tewfik's daughter. She began to hum it.

"Sing it aloud," said Selim Pasha.

Pembeh sang and danced it, undulating and quivering, snapping her fingers at an imaginary bully:

> Surely that was Bilal Bey! I heard a shot!
> I wonder, whom hd Bloody Bilal pot?
> I will never marry thee, I'll not repent!
> Though thou woo me seven years, I'll not relent!

"Do you feel that way about Bilal, Rabia?" Sabiha Hanim asked.

"I suppose I do," she confessed.

The tune became popular in the Konak. Pembeh would shake her belly and dance to the lilt of it. Rabia sang it to Tewfik, and it caught his fancy. He used it in his shadow-play as the song of the "Albanian Bully." The street boys took it up; they sang it in chorus, especially when they saw Bilal turn the corner. Bilal himself was being tortured with it. He had enough to make him miserable without that confounded air. All meetings with Rabia were stopped. Bairam Aga would break his bones if he dared to run after her.

Bilal had no wish to marry the ugly and—to him—elderly daughter of the Pasha. But Rabia snubbed him nowadays; she passed him as though she had never seen him before. He brooded over his love for her, and he longed to regain her confidence. But when he wandered into the Sinekli-Bakkal one night, and stood under Rabia's window, thinking of the St. George's Day when he and Rabia had been so happy, he heard Rabia's voice singing the damned tune behind the lattice:

> I will never marry thee, I'll not repent!
> Though thou woo me seven years, I'll not relent!

26

"BILAL BEY!" the song passed through the quarter of the Sinekli-Bakkal like a breeze of gay sound, and died away. The memory of Bilal himself remained only as a fading picture in Rabia's mind. For Tewfik was ill. He had contracted typhoid. So prevalent was the malady that the people called it simply "the fever." Selim Pasha's doctor attended him, and said that it was a severe case, that Tewfik was in danger Rabia had to stay in his room and nurse him. Ramazan came and went. No chanting that year, no fees for the Imam.

A serious illness such as Tewfik's was a communal affair. It evoked the neighbourly solicitude of the Sinekli-Bakkal, showed the solidarity of its inhabitants, and enhanced the importance of the back street. The deaths in that street during the last ten years had been due to extreme old age or to the usual diseases which babies develop, and of which they die. But here was a man, as strong as a lion, as handsome as a picture, and a jolly soul withal, yet he might die at any moment. It was a local event.

The malady demanded quiet; noise, the doctor said, would be fatal. Therefore silence reigned in the gay little street. Women carried on their gossip by gestures of head and hands. The urchins took their spinning tops to the next street. "Uncle Tewfik" might never again make them laugh or cry with his paper shadows on the lighted screens. If passing strangers raised their voices, the women from the fountain went up to them and told them in dramatic and tragic tones that under yonder roof was a sick man with "the fever." Customers tiptoed into the shop and gave their orders in whispers.

Every day some woman among the neighbours cooked a dish and carried it to Rabia. They took turns in this service, so that Rabia might not have to leave Tewfik in order to prepare food. The poorest woman would have felt that she was out of things if she had not been able to offer a bowl of hot soup. The Sinekli-Bakkal took it in all the spirit of a play, a play which had sad and even tragic possibilities. The last act no one could guess. Nevertheless, it was a drama in which everyone played a part, and a part in which the kindly side of human nature was emphasised. They acted their parts with simplicity and realism.

"Is it the head fever or the stomach fever?" they asked Rakim.

Rakim pointed solemnly to the head. Tewfik was in a constant state of delirium, and recognised no one.

Rabia slaved for Tewfik upstairs, and Rakim slaved for Rabia downstairs. Pembeh lent a hand; the place was immaculate. As the two of them scrubbed the stairs they could hear Tewfik's voice, loud and incoherent. He was haunted by visions in which Emineh once more reigned supreme.

"Oh, Lord, in the name of Thy Holiness, save us!" Tewfik sang. He was a boy in a procession, and was holding Emineh's hands. "My rose of Paradise, my bud mouthed one," he stammered, making love to a young wife. Occasionally his mind would catch the reflection of a scene in Gallipoli. What Rabia heard then sobered and aged her.

In the end he took a turn for the better, and the delirium gave way to his old-time sanity. The Tewfik who returned from those clouded wanderings was the very shadow of his former self, and he stuck to Rabia like a leech.

Sabiha Hanim tried in vain to persuade the girl to leave the convalescent now and then. The housekeeper called daily, and one afternoon she said the usual thing with unusual emphasis.

"To-night you must be sure to come to the Konak!"

Rabia was making coffee for her in the kitchen. The woman sat on a stool; in front of her was a basket of fruit, the daily offering to the sick man.

"To-night is a gala affair. The engagement of the Pasha's daughter to Bilal Bey will be announced. There will be wonderful doings."

Rabia looked round.

"So soon? At last the gardener's nephew is going to be as important as he thinks himself!"

"Why not, my little Rabia? He is a handsome fellow. He has already a room in the Selamlik, and the servants are ordered to address him as 'Mr Son-in-law.' The marriage will take place two years from now. It's true that she's a little older than he, but his height makes him appear older than her."

The woman knew of the romance between Rabia and Bilal. She did not mean to hurt the girl, but she had to talk. Rabia was of her own class, and the poor learn early to accept bad news, even kicks and blows, without much ado. The housekeeper was tired of having always to find some roundabout way of telling the truth when she had to convey bad news to a member of the Pasha's family. The rich were impossible in their exactions, but Rabia was patient and reasonable. She listened, saying nothing.

The woman continued to relate amusing details about "Mr Son-in-law" and the bride to be. Poof! Twenty years old, no chin, weak eyes, and so unpleasant to look at! It served Bilal right. . . . Rabia began to imagine scenes from Bilal's married life. She ached strangely; an old wound was reopening within her heart. She rose and picked up the basket. She did not try to force a smile as she said:

"I must go up to Tewfik. . . . I kiss the hand of the lady."

Late that afternoon Vehbi Effendi and Peregrini called

to see Tewfik. Peregrini remained in the kitchen and watched Rabia making coffee. He talked in his usual friendly tone; he even patted her shoulder once or twice in a fatherly way. She was silent, but she looked at him as if she liked to see him there.

"Shall I take your coffee upstairs, Signor?" she asked when she had poured the coffee into three small cups.

"Leave mine here and take theirs upstairs. I would rather stay with you."

After she had left the kitchen he heard voices in the shop—voices that sounded excited, as though they were telling news. The dwarf came into the kitchen with a bewildered face.

"Oh Signor, Rabia's mother died last night! One of the neighbours has come to tell me. She thinks Rabia ought to know. How do you think she will take the news?"

"Let me tell her, Rakim. I can do that sort of thing. . . . I was a monk once." He laughed, but he spoke softly. "From what I know of you all mothers mean a lot to you—they do to us too."

"They mean a tremendous lot to the men, but I don't know how it is with women . . . they are so different." Rakim was thinking of Rabia's last visit to Emineh.

"Uncle Rakim, take a *nargileh* to Vehbi Effendi," said Rabia, coming into the kitchen with the empty tray in her hand.

Peregrini looked at her intently. Her eyes were sparkling. Beneath the delicate skin was the wine ruby colour of the old days. She had not looked so well since the beginning of Tewfik's illness. This awoke delicious memories, ideas which he had forcibly put aside. She became conscious that the look in his eyes was almost hungry, and she said hurriedly:

"Tewfik is looking well to-day; he is joking; it is like old times."

Peregrini did not answer; his eyes were still on her face. She realised that he was looking at her with tenderness and compassion, and with something else as well. He believed he was hiding that something else from her, but she felt deeply stirred by it. There was a sweet pain in her heart; the same ache, the same happiness which the memory of Bilal's lips on hers had caused. How did a kiss and a look manage to affect her in that strange way? It made her conscious of some dark mystery, of some wild force within her. She sat on the stool and covered her face with her hands.

"Don't look at me like that, Signor, I can't bear it!"

She knew he was coming towards her; she felt his hard hands on her shoulders, gripping them; she waited, throbbing, but not knowing what to expect. The hands left her shoulders to pull her own hands from her face

"Your mother is dead, my child."

"Oh, oh. . . ." Was it a sob or an expression of surprise? She remained on the stool and looked at him, a dumb pain in her eyes. He felt uncertain whether the pain were due to her grief or to some disappointment at being robbed of something she had expected. She seemed incalculable. He stared at the exquisite silken lashes which slowly veiled her paling cheeks. A mysterious movement, a slight tremor shook her lips. Was she trying to suppress her tears? If she wept, he would go and put his arms around her.

Rabia lifted her lashes and asked:

"Do you think Tewfik will die too, Signor?"

"Never," he said fervently. "But you mustn't tell him the bad news: he is not strong enough to hear it. If you want to talk about it, talk to me. I have a mother too, my little friend."

"Where, Signor?"

"In my own country, of course. Did you think an old music master was not born of woman?"

"But you are not old, Signor!" After a pause she added: "Don't you ever go to see her?"

He shivered, for she had raised a ghost. Should he tell her about himself? Who he was and his past. . . . He would enjoy talking of himself to the girl in the soft dusk, with the charcoal glowing in the brazier and the cat purring. . . .

"Vehbi Effendi is calling you, Signor!" Rakim's head was thrust from the half-open door.

27

In the morning Rabia washed Tewfik's face and tidied his bed with more than her usual cheerfulness. In spite of it her features wore a pinched look, and there were black circles round her eyes.

"You did not chant this Ramazan, Rabia. I wonder what the Imam has done without the fees. He must be pretty poor. I dreamed of Emineh last night, dreamed of her all night long."

"Uncle Rakim is going to shave you; you look like a bogy with that nasty beard. No, no, no, I won't be kissed."

"Emineh was trying to say something. . . ."

"Don't talk of Emineh," she said, her mouth rising crookedly at one corner. "Uncle Rakim is here. Come and begin lathering his face, little uncle. If he won't lie still, I'll hold his hands."

"Jealousy, my Sugar?" Tewfik grinned. "I shall talk of Emineh all the time. What is more, you are going to her to kiss her hand and find out whether she lacks anything. She was trying to explain things in such a curious way. . . ."

"We don't want your dreams, Tewfik. Here, I will hold the soap bowl, little uncle."

"Not necessary," Rakim said, shaving slowly and neatly.

Tewfik was listening to the noises in the street.

"I hear religious chanting; a funeral is passing by. Go and look out of the window, Rabia. Tell me, is it a woman or a man?"

Rakim shaved more slowly while Rabia remained at the window looking out.

The Emineh who had nagged her for years and years—

all the years of her childhood—was now in that narrow box covered with shawls, on the top of which lay a pretty pink kerchief, the one she might have worn as a girl, to catch Tewfik's eye! The Imam wore his holiday turban, enormous, and wonderfully wound about his fez. He looked bent and puny in his loose black gown under that huge turban. He walked with the handful of old men, mostly turbaned, who were carrying Emineh's coffin on their shoulders, their weak voices mumbling prayers in Arabic. Rabia threw herself on the divan sobbing:

"You must not die, Tewfik; you must not die. . . ."

"It must be a man," said Tewfik, relieved. "No, my Sugar, I will never die, never while you are alive."

In the afternoon he slept. Rabia went down to the shop and sat at the counter for the first time since her father's illness. Rakim was moving about restlessly. A stranger walked in and stood in the middle of the shop, waiting. His fez was unusually red and high. He was tall and thin, with eyes that protruded unpleasantly. He seemed surprised and annoyed to note that the girl at the counter paid him little attention. He had not noticed the dwarf, who stared at him as though frozen with fear, his eyes wide open.

Rabia felt irritated by the stranger's manner, and continued to count the change. The man's goggle eyes, turning round, presently caught sight of Rakim. He looked at him superciliously, much as though the little fellow had been a worm crawling under his feet.

"Is this Tewfik's shop?"

"Yes, yes, sir." Rakim's tone of awe increased Rabia's irritation.

"What is it you want, man?" she asked in her sharpest tone.

Ignoring her, he turned once more to Rakim:

"I want to see Tewfik at once."

"I will go up and see if he is awake, sir."

"Who is he to sleep in the afternoon?"

"He has been very ill, sir. I will take you up to him." Rakim's voice had almost a whining note.

"Me go up to that fellow's bed! . . ." He narrowed his eyes and bent his head as though he were a wild boar about to charge. "You don't know whom you are addressing! I come from Zati Bey, the Minister of the Interior!"

"My father knows Zati Bey."

This time he deigned answer her. Twisting his moustache and ogling her through the slits of his still narrowed eyes, he said:

"His orders are that I am to take Tewfik to him at once, little lady; this very minute!"

"You are a bully and a dog!" She spat out the words in anger.

He was taken aback.

"Does she really know who Zati Bey is?" he asked Rakim, and this time his protruding eyes were wide open.

"No, sir, well, yes, brother, but take no offence, for I assure you she is beyond herself with anxiety for her father . . . She is so young."

"Don't 'brother' me, you dirty, crawling mole! Go on upstairs!" And he followed Rakim, who felt that the sooner the fellow was out of Rabia's sight the better. The girl was unmanageable. She was left wondering what could have made Rakim look so frightened. A whisper reached her from the door. Mr Big-Brother was peeping in.

"Rabia Abla, are you alone?"

"What do you want, Mr Big-Brother?" She felt glad to see him. He might have his faults, but he was big and strong.

"I saw that whoreson, that dogseed, that Nimrod-faced swine, nosing about. He asked for Uncle Tewfik's shop. He has left his carriage at the corner. I thought I'd better

be at hand in case you needed help. The street is deserted . . . 'no bird flies and no caravan passes,' all due to the arrival of that dogseed!"

Mr Big-Brother wiped his long moustaches, spat backwards, and rubbed his palms against each other cheerily.

"Do you know the man, Mr Big-Brother?"

"Who wouldn't know the unclean swine from his red fez? What does he want here?"

Rabia understood. She had heard that spies wore very red fezzes, but she had never seen one. The street of the Sinekli-Bakkal was too humble to interest them.

"He has come from Zati Bey, the Minister of the Interior He threatened us!"

"Abomination on the grave of his ancestors! May the dogs defile his shirt-collar, his faith, and his religion, may . . ."

"Don't swear at religion, Mr Big-Brother!"

"May . . ."

"Shuuuut!" interrupted Rabia. Her ears had detected footsteps on the stairs. Mr Big-Brother leaned against the counter, pretending to give an order.

"Two okes of garlic, three okes of onion. . . "

Who had ever heard of two okes of garlic? Rabia smiled in spite of the extreme tenseness in the air. Tewfik came into the shop, leaning feebly against the spy. He looked pale and anxious.

"I will be back to-night, Rabia; there is some mistake," he said, trying to appear brave.

Rabia and Mr Big-Brother watched them go out, and Rakim followed trembling at Tewfik's heels. They waited until the distant noise of wheels had died away. As Mr Big-Brother had said, the street was deserted. The red fez had blown through it like an evil wind, and had frightened away the inhabitants. They had fled to the shelter of their own roofs. Mr Big-Brother walked out into the street coughing valiantly.

28

THE Imam had at last found the means to avenge himself on Tewfik. But he thought deeply and hesitated long before employing it. When he was told that Rabia would not be able to chant that Ramazan he had looked grave. Emmeh was ill, and he had to find the money for a woman to look after the house. Times were hard. He had hoped that Selim Pasha might be able to help him, but when he called at the Konak he found that he had chosen a bad time. The great man himself was worried with regard to finances, and when the Imam unrolled the tale of his family troubles he was told that he must not expect to live on his granddaughter's fees all his life.

The Imam left the Pasha's presence hoping that presently the great man might relent and come to his aid. He soon realised however, that Selim Pasha's star was on the wane and that his days of prosperity were over. Already a number of the servants had been dismissed, and the expenses of the household reduced.

"Why shouldn't I try to get some help from Zati Bey?" he asked himself. The Imam knew that Zati Bey was on bad terms with Selim Pasha. Meanwhile not the least of his worries was the nagging and whining of his sick daughter. She was crying to him for revenge on Tewfik. When Emineh died extinguished like a candle, he decided to do something. With dire poverty and destitute old age staring him in the face, he would do his best to get help, and if possible to humble Tewfik, who was responsible for his troubles. Selim Pasha was to blame also. His conduct towards the Imam had been heartless. He too must be made to suffer.

The old man sat down and composed a long epistle, writing it on expensive paper with many flourishes by way of ornament. The primary object of his letter to Zati Bey was to beg for money; therefore it was a petition in due form. But the writer knew that the Minister of the Interior would not help anyone merely on philanthropic grounds. Therefore he filled the letter with useful information relating to Selim Pasha, or Selim Pasha's son, and exposed Tewfik's parody of Zati Bey. The Imam could vouch for the veracity of his disclosures. They set his most Moslem conscience at rest. All of them, including the man whom he was begging to help him, were worthy of the fiercest and most scorching hell-fire. This would confound them all and procure material benefit for the Imam. It was a case of killing, not only two, but several birds with the self-same stone. It was a case of "setting the dog to tear the swine." So he presented his petition in person to the Minister of the Interior, and waited for results.

And Zati Bey was reading the long-winded and confused epistle for the tenth time while his goggle-eyed emissary was dragging a sick and panic-stricken Tewfik out of bed. The perusal of that evil report was edifying. It made Zati Bey realise fully how popular political satire reached its most realistic expression under the most oppressive and despotic regimes. A free press may lead the ordinary journalist to harp on ideas, on dull criticisms, which would be read only by a limited public. Folk-tales and popular jokes were repeated by all; folk-theatre caricatures were seen by all. Zati Bey's personality, with all his vice and corruption, in the form of a sordid living picture, was eternally fixed in the mind of the masses. How unerring, how impeccable popular vengeance could be! He swore to put an end to Tewfik—the ungrateful wretch!

By the time Zati Bey had read the Imam's epistle five

times and consumed five cups of coffee and smoked about ten cigarettes, he had begun to calm down. It would be easy enough to exile Tewfik but—would it be wise? Exiled, he might continue to give impersonations of Zati Bey . . . and every governor of a province was a potential Minister of the Interior. Any one of them might use Tewfik's art to attack Zati Bey. Better surely to frighten the fellow, to put a stop to his acting and keep him under surveillance.

The door opened and the man he had sent to fetch Tewfik entered.

"Tewfik was in bed and looks like a ghost . . . but he has dragged himself out at Your Excellency's order. What a daughter he has! She nearly drove me mad."

"You didn't frighten the girl, I hope."

"Sir, she called me a dog and a bully and spat in my face without any provocation on my part!"

Zati Bey suppressed a smile. Women seemed sometimes to be possessed by a devil. A little pious Koran-chanter flashing into anger—it stirred his imagination.

"What is she like?" he asked, assuming an indifference he did not feel.

"Not much to look at . . . a tiger of a wench . . . as thin as a broomstick."

"Bring up Tewfik," Zati Bey ordered. He had no time for young shrews who were ugly as well as shrewish.

Tewfik could climb the stairs only by holding on to the balustrade. His weakness was pitiful, and his anxiety and fear extreme, but his mind was able to note the appearance of the new Minister's house. An enormous place, full of cheap gaudy, Europeanised furniture. An unnecessary number of servants—servants who had not been trained to serve—crowded the corridors. The face and soul of Zati Bey's house was just what one would expect of the typical upstart, newly rich establishment.

Zati Bey himself was changed. His neglected attire, unbuttoned jacket and untidy collar had given place to a well-buttoned Palace uniform. The eyes and mouth, once friendly, had an arrogant expression.

"Sit down, Tewfik." He pointed to a chair opposite his. His manner was condescending. He wished all present to know that he could give only a few minutes to such an unimportant matter as Tewfik's case.

"I hear that your grocer's shop is flourishing. . . . I have also heard that you have become the chief entertainer of Selim Pasha."

"I entertain his son, sir."

"I hear that your daughter also is an entertainer of Selim Pasha's family, of the men as well as the women. Between the two of you, you must be making good money."

"I don't take their money, sir. They were kind to my daughter when I was in exile. They educated her, had her taught whatever she knows. . . . If anything has been said about her . . ."

"We will leave women out of the question," Zati Bey interrupted sternly. "Thank your stars that I am the Minister of the Interior and an unusually powerful one. You have been reported to His Majesty for sedition, and the report came into my hands. I have not yet shown it to His Majesty."

"What have I done, sir?"

"Selim Pasha's son and others, known for their leaning towards Young Turkism, meet in your room and remain there until after midnight."

"There is nothing in that, sir. They are not Young Turks. All that happens is that we have some music. I will tell them not to cross my threshold again."

"You will do no such thing. If you are not in their confidence you must try to be."

"What for, sir?"

"What for? To report what they say. . . ."

"You mean I should spy on them? I couldn't do that, sir."

The Minister's face darkened. He inquired, with cruel emphasis:

"Any objections?"

"Yes, sir . . . no, sir . . . why, I couldn't do such a thing!"

Tewfik was crying now unashamedly. He was frightened; he felt helpless and sick at being asked to do such a thing.

The clown evidently believed that he could afford the luxury of a conscience! Zati Bey took note of that, and decided to temper his terrorising with a show of magnanimity.

"All right, we won't talk of that now. I hear that you have been acting stories and conducting shadow-plays."

Tewfik felt guilty. Why had he ever started them?

"I will give it up; I swear I'll never do it again, sir!"

"You had better not! Remember what happened to Nefi, the greatest of our poets. Remember how he was strangled and thrown into the sea. All that for daring to satirise a Minister. Don't look frightened! I won't have you strangled. You are a father . . . by the way, why didn't you bring your daughter to pay her respects to my lady?"

"She is a bad-mannered girl," Tewfik lied. "Besides, she is always working: the girl is the more serious bread-winner of the family."

"I hear that she sings," said Zati Bey, remembering certain passages from the Imam's report.

"The gayest song sounds like a requiem in her mouth, sir: it is always religion with her. She is the very image of her grandfather, the Imam."

Tewfik had become the perfect actor once more. Zati Bey's harping on his daughter made him uneasy; it reminded him of the Gallipoli days. If the Minister of the Interior had the smallest spark of interest in Rabia it must be extinguished

then and there. And Tewfik had evidently succeeded, for the man rose.

"My lady may be interested in your daughter. She likes chanting. Religion bores me. Now I'll send you back."

Zati Bey's voice during the last part of their colloquy had softened, but before the spy who had brought Tewfik he spoke very sternly.

"Stop your shows . . . or else I will break your pate and *burst your eye. . . ." But he paused in the middle of his* threat to temper it with magnanimity, as he had previously decided to do, and he turned to the goggle-eyed spy: "Take Tewfik Effendi back home in my carriage. Here is five pounds for the daughter. She must have been anxious. Good-bye, Tewfik."

29

THE First Chamberlain stood before his mahogany desk, buttoned up in his tight and elegant long black coat. People wondered how such a man, refined, a scholar, and notoriously benevolent, could remain so loyal to Abdul Hamid. But his detachment from the *milieu* in which he lived was complete. He performed his duties with tact and ability; they had become nearly mechanical. His leisure was occupied in collecting antique Turkish pipes, daggers, and old English clocks. In his evenings he employed himself carving back-scratchers out of sandalwood. This interest he shared with Selim Pasha, and it created a certain sympathy between them. Also he was a mystic, a disciple of Vehbi Effendi. He hoped some day to write a religious poem His library contained only the mystical and philosophical works of the early writers in Turkish, Arabic, and Persian. The collection contained not a single modern book; he was a stranger to his time and to its literature.

Incongruous as he seemed to outsiders in the Hamidian *entourage*, he was still not so inconsequent as they deemed him. He accepted things as they were. He had no ambition to change the world, for to his mind change and disorder were synonymous. His Majesty was the centre of the social and political order. His Majesty gave a certain stability to the world. Further, he was devoted to His Majesty as a man; that royal person had the manners of a gentleman, never lost his temper, never raised his voice, and spoke to his inferiors in a tone of mild friendliness. His darkest intrigues were hatched in an atmosphere of good-humour and placidity. And the First Chamberlain valued good manners next to his

religious creed. Temperamentally he preferred the good-mannered tyranny of polite despots to the reign of rude and unpolished liberal rulers.

By the First Chamberlain the seamy side of court life was scarcely noticed. He was blind to the rivalry of the favourites in office, the corruption, the shameless insistence on obtaining concessions, the bribery. Such things existed, as did sunshine and storm. He pulled down the blinds in his room and put his fingers into his ears when there was a thunderstorm. In the same way he pulled down a curtain over his mind and refused to hear mere human disturbances. Disagreeable things, villainous things, even tragic episodes occurred in the refined atmosphere of the Palace, but he remained unaware of them.

The First Chamberlain's principal duty was to be ready to talk with His Majesty whenever that august person wished to unburden his mind. He had also to carry messages, pleasant or unpleasant, and the decorations, the red purses, and all the other royal presents were in his custody. His Majesty felt safe with the man. His Majesty shared his Chamberlain's mania for good manners.

To day he had to give an unpleasant message to his old friend Selim Pasha. He did not like doing it. He disliked it all the more because Zati Bey would be present . . . and it was because of Zati Bey that the message had to be given. The Minister of the Interior talked in a loud voice; he gesticulated like a street vendor. The First Chamberlain found him a disgusting sight.

Selim Pasha came in, his face gloomy, his figure bent. The intrigues of Zati Bey had kept him from seeing the Sultan for some time, and he felt both humiliated and anxious. He ignored his enemy's presence as if the chair in which he sat had been empty. Yet Zati Bey was doing his best to show that he was there—he was laughing, smoking,

crossing and uncrossing his legs like a badly brought-up schoolboy.

After a short exchange of polite phrases the First Chamberlain rose.

"I have a royal message to deliver," he said.

Selim Pasha and Zati were instantly on their feet.

"An unduly large amount of seditious literature has been smuggled into this country."

"It comes through the foreign mails," Selim Pasha remarked. "It is the Minister of the Interior, our younger and more progressive colleague, who has taken charge of all contacts with foreign institutions. He believes in compromise, and in preserving the good-will of both foreigner and the Young Turk."

"If the Young Turk is Your Excellency's son I certainly wish to be careful," retorted Zati Bey. "Some of the pamphlets which are arriving are addressed to Your Excellency's son."

"Would you be kind enough to produce them?" Selim Pasha asked quietly.

"I cannot. Your Excellency does not expect me to search the foreign subjects through whom in all probability your son receives them. There is the unpleasant fact of the Capitulations, and His Majesty wishes to avoid international complications."

Selim Pasha looked at the First Chamberlain questioningly.

"His Majesty does not doubt your loyalty, Selim Pasha. Your son may not know of the pamphlets addressed to him. Zati Bey was told this by an employee of the French Post-office, who wishes his identity to be a secret. His Majesty wishes me to warn you. He would like you to find out whether your son . . ."

"Pardon me, sir," Selim Pasha interrupted once more.

"If my son has dared to join the ranks of His Majesty's enemies, he has been careful enough to keep the fact a secret from me. If I spoke to him of the matter he would be in a position to warn his accomplices. If anything is to be proved against him he must not know that he is suspected."

Selim Pasha's equanimity gave way, his grey eyes shone dangerously as he continued:

"I should like to catch anyone doing such a thing--I would bastinado the wretch until the soles of his feet flew off like beaten cotton! I would send him to the desert to heal his hurts! My son, His Majesty's son—every mother's son, attempting to undermine the safety of the State, should receive no mercy!"

Again he stopped. The First Chamberlain watched him with interest, but Zati Bey was taken aback by this outburst. There was silence for two long minutes. Then Selim Pasha spoke again in his usual cool manner:

"Will you please lay at His Majesty's feet these sentiments of mine, sir? With all due respect to Zati Bey's modern views, I believe that he has not done his duty. He should have found out the names of my son's foreign friends and have had them watched."

"Will you wait a few minutes, gentlemen?" said the First Chamberlain, walking quickly out of the room.

Ten minutes later he was back. Standing in the middle of the room, he saluted and gave the royal message:

"His Majesty has charged me with his salutations to you both. He has thought fit to charge Selim Pasha with the investigation into the matter of smuggling in seditious literature. Zati Bey lacks the experience to solve such a problem. The unrest among the military students is thought to be due to the influx of these subversive pamphlets. Will you please report next week, Selim Pasha, the result of whatever action you may think fit to take? Now, gentlemen, I

believe you will be wanting to retire."

He walked to the door and opened it. Zati Bey passed out first. A red purse found its way into Selim Pasha's hand, and the First Chamberlain's voice whispered into his ear: "A token of His Majesty's appreciation!"

It was the first red purse which had ever burnt Selim Pasha's fingers. Out of loyalty to the State he was to hound down his own son, but was to receive compensation for this in the form of money. . . . By Allah, he hated the gold pieces!

"Nearness to Sultans is a consuming fire," he repeated in Persian, as he entered his carriage.

30

"HONOURED by Your Majesty's order to trace the person or persons involved in the smuggling of seditious literature, I have begun my investigations. The Minister of the Interior having suggested that my son was a possible recipient of such literature, I had all his friends shadowed. Having found out that the music master Peregrini calls at the French Post-office, I had him followed. He came out last Wednesday with a paper parcel. He was promptly attacked by pickpockets and relieved of it. The parcel contained two books: one a treatise on Hell by an author named Dante, and the other a book by a man called Mazzini. I am submitting the books. He has complained of the attack, as his purse and watch were taken also, in order to give the affair the air of a genuine robbery. They will be restored to him. I humbly beg Your Majesty to believe that in our attempts to bring the culprits to light every care will be taken to avoid friction with foreign representatives, and every precaution taken to keep the clauses of the Capitulations inviolate."

So ran the first report presented by Selim Pasha to the Sultan concerning the smuggling of dangerous literature.

"My son has asked permission to take his wife to Beirut, as she has contracted a weakness of the chest," ran the second report. "To prevent the possibility of his trying to escape, and in order to investigate possible contacts with suspicious characters in Beirut, two of the ablest men of my department are following him. If he attempts to escape he will be at once arrested. He is leaving on Friday, and I wish to assure Your Majesty that the matter will be settled

within the fortnight to the satisfaction of Your Majesty."

Selim Pasha knew not how much sooner the matter would be settled.

Meanwhile Sabiha Hanim had guessed that her husband was restored to the royal favour, but she could not understand why he should continue to look harassed and gloomy. His good fortune seemed to give him no pleasure and what was more surprising, he did not speak of it to his wife. He seemed ill at ease in her presence; he even avoided her. As a matter of fact, his mind was centred on the telegrams he received from Beirut. Hilmi was behaving normally, and during the first two days after his arrival he had had no contact with anyone. Selim Pasha never dreamed of shielding his son, but he did promise himself that he would sacrifice a ram at the Eyub mausoleum if he were able satisfactorily to clear the boy. As the reports came in from Beirut the Pasha grew more hopeful. He felt that he could at last smoke the pipe of peace in his wife's room, and tease Rabia a little. But Rabia was not there. The old couple had just decided to send for her when she came in, looking seriously worried.

"I have been waiting for Tewfik. I am anxious," she said.

"Where is he?" asked the Pasha.

"He left this afternoon intending to play a practical joke on a newly married friend of his at Kadi-Keuy . . . one of his old theatrical friends."

"What sort of a joke?" asked the Pasha again, puffing at his pipe and feeling light-hearted.

"He dressed up in women's clothes, and he said he would pretend that he was a former wife." Rabia was laughing at Tewfik's plan. 'No one would recognise him; behind the veil his eyes look like those of a woman. Oh dear, I hope that his friend's bride has not murdered Tewfik in a fit of jealousy! But I shouldn't have told you, for he asked me not

to mention it to anyone. He is as sensitive as ever about his feminine roles."

"Tewfik shouldn't masquerade in women's clothes," said the Pasha. "If I caught him at it I would have him bastinadoed."

"You wouldn't have the heart. Tewfik has been so gay since that parting dinner of Hilmi Bey's. They gave him fizzy bubbly stuff to drink. He has been in good spirits ever since. He had been so gloomy since his illness. The summons from Zati Bey had made him jumpy, and on the top of it my mother's death. . . ."

"I forgot about that Zati Bey affair. Why did Zati Bey send for him?"

"He had received a report that Tewfik was impersonating him in the shadow-play."

The housekeeper appeared at the door.

"Rana Bey is at the Selamlik and wishes to see the Pasha Effendi," she announced.

Rana Bey was Selim Pasha's assistant, and his untimely visit meant some serious development in the Department of Police

The man was rubbing his hands when the Pasha, in his dressing-gown, entered the room. He was a man with an enormous beaky nose and a very small chin. His eyes were tiny pin-points, and were without lashes to soften their harsh glitter. Chinlessness, at least in his case, did not denote lack of energy. He looked like, and was, a bird of prey.

"I presume that your visit is due to the arrest of a man in women's clothes," said the Pasha smiling.

"Why, that is so, sir!"

"Is it 'Kız-Tewfik'?"

"The same, sir; but how did you know?"

"He is a neighbour, he was an actor once, and likes parad-

ing in female attire. I was threatening his daughter just now that if I caught him at it I would have him whipped. What was the wretch doing? Drunk? Using disrespectful language in the coffee-house, or impersonating the Minister of the Interior?"

The Pasha could not think of anything more serious in connection with Tewfik; but the glitter in Rana Bey's eyes made him uneasy

"More serious than that. He was arrested on coming out of the French Post office. He was disguised as a woman, and he had a packet of dangerous literature under his arm."

There was a sinking feeling in Selim Pasha's stomach. The optimism which the telegrams from Beirut had induced was fading. A little hazily, but quite accurately, the Pasha was reconstructing what had happened. Hilmi had invited the poor fool to dinner, had stuffed him with good things to eat and filled him with champagne, and had then flattered him into fetching seditious letters from the French Post-office. Dishonourable! Despicable! His son shielding himself behind a clown. . . . Unforgivable cowardice! . . . Infinitely uglier and more irreparable even than high treason!

With the grim mask he wore during business hours veiling his torment, he did not seem unlike his usual self to his assistant as he said:

"Sit down; tell me all about it, Rana Bey."

"I had my men posted near the man who roasts chestnuts at the door of the French Post-office. A considerable number of young and elegant women go in. When my men saw a woman in old-fashioned clothes go into the Post-office they were suspicious. She did not look the kind that calls for foreign mails. At first they hesitated to touch her. She might have belonged to some Minister's establishment The woman, when she left the Post-office, stopped and bought some chestnuts. The hands were too large for a woman, and when

she lifted her dress to pull out her purse, they saw a man's shoes. My men followed him and, pretending to flirt with him in the rough style of the streets, they pulled off his veil. The hair came off with it. The man wearing this disguise was at once taken to the Department, and I have looked over the letters which were found in his possession. The matter is very serious, sir."

"Any address on the letters?"

"He must have destroyed the address while he was in the Post-office. We could not make him confess. I should not have thought a man in women's clothes would have been so stubborn. I got Muzaffer, the Eye-burster, to handle him. No result. Not a word!"

Selim Pasha rose.

"Wait a few minutes, I will dress and go with you to the Police Department," he said.

31

THE Department of Public Security was almost festive, with all its lights up. The officials had the jubilant air of hunters who had at last caught a wily fox. They brought the wily fox into the chief huntsman's presence, between two big men of brutal appearance.

Tewfik still retained a part of his feminine make-up. The red and white on his cheeks, the black kohl around the eyes were there, but the colours had run together. On his face were other black patches that did not suggest cosmetics. From his eyes down to the two sides of his chin two black lines, two kohl blackened streams of tears, had run. His eyes, those good-humoured brown eyes with their womanly softness, looked dazed. It was doubtful whether he saw or understood what was happening. The woman's long print dress, with a shawl round the waist as a belt, was torn and muddy.

Selim Pasha connected Tewfik's dazed attitude with the man on his right. This was Muzaffer, whom Rana Bey had called "the Eye-burster." He was usually given the handling of dangerous and stubborn political suspects. A very fat man, chin over chin showing above the tightly buttoned collar of his jacket, he had flabby cheeks and a fleshy forehead. Harmless enough at first sight, he was rather like a retired wrestler, a strong man who had given up his exercise and diet. The tiny eyes, sunk in the elephantine mass of flesh, had a friendly glance. He smiled pleasantly and had an obliging air. Yet this was the man who could not only make a victim deaf for life, but could, if allowed to use the full strength of his fist, burst an eye. In this case, as he wished to

make Tewfik confess before the Pasha arrived, the fist had done its best.

"Give the man a chair and a cigarette," said Selim Pasha. Tewfik took the cigarette mechanically, but did not put it to his lips.

"I think the man is acting, sir. May I . . .' Muzaffer was offering to make Tewfik speak.

"You may nothing . . . leave the man alone. You may go, both of you."

When Selim Pasha and Rana Bey were alone with Tewfik, the Pasha leaned over and looked into Tewfik's eyes. He patted the poor creature on the shoulder, as he would have patted a wounded horse.

"You'd better tell me, Tewfik. Who was it who sent you to the Post-office to fetch letters? It does not matter if it is my own son I am His Majesty's servant before I am a father. I will see that justice is done."

Tewfik's face was gradually regaining its normal expression He could nearly understand what the Pasha said. The voice invoked visions of good cheer, of that bubbly stuff which had tasted so good. And Hilmi's voice, that brotherly voice which said: "Destroy the address, and don't tell anyone I sent you to the French Post-office." That was the only voice which had adopted him as a brother, had trusted in his courage, in his loyalty. Other people had laughed, had enjoyed his comedies. In the days of his success they had courted and run after him. When he had got into trouble they had helped to kick him while he was down What did he matter? He was only a clown. He closed his eyes and his lips moved. The two men leaned over and listened.

"Vallahi, Billahi, I will not tell."

Selim Pasha's voice became more persuasive.

"But you must. All the more so if it was my son. Was it Hilmi? I swear that you shall not be tortured any more; you

you'll be exiled somewhere. I will let Rabia go with you. I will set you free at once. But you must tell me."

Rabia's name opened the floodgates, and two blackened streams, two kohl-besmeared trickles of water, ran down the man's cheeks. The Pasha knew of men who would rather die than tell, but that sort never shed tears.

"Have the man put to bed, no more 'handling.' Rana Bey."

"I understand, sir."

"Have a doctor attend him, and have him washed and put into decent clothes."

"Shall I send for his own clothes?"

"No; I don't want the daughter to know of this yet. I will question him again to-morrow."

When Tewfik was out of the room, the Pasha looked at his assistant and said through his clenched teeth:

"If it was Hilmi, he shall receive his share of the punishment."

Selim Pasha sat down with the incriminating letters. Many of these consisted of extracts from the revolutionary papers which were published in Paris. To Selim Pasha they were as disconnected and foolish as a lunatic's dream. Among them was one more serious. The name of the person to whom it had been addressed was not given. It told of preparations for a general rising which was to dethrone the Sultan. It gave names, the names of those who were implicated in the conspiracy. This meant arrests on a large scale . . . and third degree methods. Hilmi might be among the arrested.

The Pasha wrote his report and despatched it to the Palace. It was already morning; life was stirring in the street.

"Send me a prayer-rug and a jug of water. I will go through the morning prayers before I rest. I will sleep on this chair for an hour."

His prayer-rug folded and put aside, he sank back in the spacious chair, and once his head rested against its stiff back he slept. Life was thickening in the street; a hurdy-gurdy was playing. The music made him dream. It was Bairam, Hilmi was six years old; he was strutting up and down with a tin sword at his side. His young mother walked round him; so gay, so lovely, bedecked with jewels. She was clapping her hands, but the boy had began to cry. He was begging for a hurdy-gurdy. Couldn't anyone stop the boy? It was for him to do so; he must whip the boy. But why? What had the child done? The vague torture of a dream in which one tries to remember something and can't! All that agonising effort to be clear. . . .

Selim Pasha woke. Beads of perspiration stood on his brow. He rose from his chair as the noise of the hurdy-gurdy came down the street.

"I shall punish him this time, so help me God," he said.

32

For four days Rabia was left in the dark. She did not know where her father was. Every morning Rakim [illegible] to Kadi Keuy, hunting up Tewfik's old friends, in[illegible]ing whether he had visited any of them in women's [illegible]. They shook their heads and looked at him queerly. [illegible] back to report failure. It was hard. The girl worked [illegible] the shop all day, and waited for him at the door of an [illegible]. Her lovely eyes were encircled by purple rings, [illegible] darkened by the shadow of impending grief.

Tewfik's disappearance was as much a communal affair as [illegible] his [illegible]. The neighbours crowded into the shop, demanding news, little groups of men and women gathered outside and talked. Round the fountain and in the coffee-house they could speak of nothing else. The street children invented a new game—the kidnapping of Uncle Tewfik. Putting their heads by turns in at the door, they asked: "Any news, Rabia Abla?"

If Rabia's mind had not been in perpetual agony she must have wondered over Sabiha Hanum's strange behaviour. She, so fond of Tewfik, so affectionate in her treatment of Rabia, hardly showed any sympathy when Rabia ran in to implore her help. The Pasha was never in his wife's room, and when the girl went up to his she found the door closed.

Selim Pasha had told his wife about Tewfik, but he had asked her not to mention the matter to Rabia—not until Tewfik had disclosed the names of his associates. He had avoided his wife's eyes. She had understood. She, on her part, had averted her eyes and assumed an air of indifference. She herself more than suspected Hilmi. What

did Selim Pasha himself know of Hilmi's share in the matter? God, how she hated her husband during those days! Above all, how she hated the name of the State, in the interests of which the Pasha was ready to hound down his own son! Rabia had sunk into a secondary plane. She was too anxious about Hilmi to think of her. On Tewfik's torture she did not allow her mind to dwell. She only prayed that he might die before the names of his associates were wrung from his lips.

By the fourth day the atmosphere of impending disaster in the Konak had spread beyond its grounds. The Sinekli-Bakkal felt it thickening over their heads. They sensed the terroristic measures that were being employed, as animals recognise the approach of danger. They stood about and whispered to one another, scanning the street corners, and dispersing gloomily whenever a stranger entered their street. Selim Pasha became a figure of dread; the sound of his carriage-wheels drove the children into cover, and even the women at the fountain hastily took shelter in their homes.

By now everyone except Rabia had connected Tewfik's disappearance with the large number of arrests that were being whispered from ear to ear. Sabiha Hanim found it necessary at last to enlighten her. She announced the bad news as mildly as she could. Rabia might take her father some clothes and tobacco, but she did not know whether the girl would be allowed to see him.

And Selim Pasha was now sure that Tewfik would not divulge the name of those who had sent him to the French Post-office. This, while it relieved his wife's fears, ate into his own soul. That clown of a human being had withstood terror, had resisted physical violence, even the promise of gold and pardon. Nothing would unlock his mouth. He had looked at his tormentors with those womanish eyes of his, the tears often running down his cheeks, but he uttered not

a word, he gave no clue. Selim Pasha could only hope to obtain a voluntary confession from Hilmi. He was, after all, Selim Pasha's son and would not allow himself to be shielded by Tewfik But the Pasha was uneasy, in mortal terror as to how his wife would take it.

The following morning Rabia appeared at the door of the sinister building that held Tewfik, with a bundle under her arm and Rakim clutching at her ample skirts. In the coffee-house of the Sinekli-Bakkal the dwarf had learned that in the Public Security Department third degree methods were employed in the handling of political suspects. His joints no longer held together: he might have been a jelly-fish. His turban awry, his eyes darting furtive glances, his wooden shoes clattering and dragging on the pavement, he held himself ready to desert Rabia at the first danger signal. But fear or no fear, he clung to her skirts.

The pathetic pair wandered through the silent corridors where people with dumb and empty eyes, holding bundles under their arms, were also wandering in quest of their kith and kin. An enormously fat man addressed them:

"What do you want, little sister?"

She looked at him gratefully, little knowing that it was Mu-atter, "the Eye-burster."

"I want to see 'Kiz-Tewfik.' "

"He is not allowed to see anybody yet. Leave the bundle; I will see that it reaches him."

"But I am his daughter."

"You should have brought a written order from the Pasha."

"If the Pasha is here I will ask him for one; I know him well."

"I'll speak to the assistant, Rana Bey," said the fat man, leading them to a door in the corridor. Leaving them there, he himself went in. It seemed an endless time before he

opened the door for Rabia to pass in. Rakim waited outside.

Rana Bey was very busy and in the worst of tempers, but knowing the Pasha's interest in the girl he had consented to receive her; he meant to be firm, all the same.

"You cannot see your father to-day. I will have you notified later."

That was a concession for the assistant, but her eyes were supplicating as those of a lost dog; yet when she spoke there was rebellion in her voice:

"I must see him, sir."

To Rana Bey's satisfaction, at that moment Selim Pasha entered the room. Rabia ran to him. She would not see that he was looking formidable and remote.

"Pasha Effendi, they won't let me see my father," she complained. The slim figure in the bundle-like clothes of a working woman with the face of a child was pitiful.

"Go home at once, Rabia. It is no use to cry." His voice was not unkind, but it was final. Her eyes were blinded with tears, and she knew her last hope of seeing Tewfik was gone. All of a sudden she threw herself at the Pasha's feet, embracing his knees.

"I won't go. Let me see him once, only through the keyhole, let me know that he is alive. Oh—oh—have you killed my father?"

By Allah, this was embarrassing. The Pasha looked around him and catching sight of the dwarf, who was hovering near the door but not daring to enter, he called to him. Rakim flew to her side.

"The Pasha is great, he is good; he will let us come another day. Come away, child. Don't anger him."

The tiny squeak which was Rakim's voice helped to soothe her. She would remember that little squeak, the little voice of a big heart. . . How tiny and absurd he was in that immense room amid men with stalwart figures and

big voices, big men with spacious chests but not a single heart among them all.

Muzaffer, "the Eye-burster," had also entered the room. He stood looking down at the girl and the dwarf, watching for a signal from the Pasha to lift them by the scruff of their necks and throw them out like the troublesome mongrels that they were.

"Let them be," said the Pasha sternly to Muzaffer, but his voice assumed a kindly tone as he addressed Rakim:

"Take her away, my man; and see that there is no unpleasant scene in the street in front of this building."

Eventually Rakim persuaded her to go. Muzaffer, "the Eye-burster," followed them.

"Give me the bundle, little sister. He was hoping some tobacco would be sent to him."

She passed him the bundle and looked into his eyes with gratitude

"Be kind to my father, Big Brother."

Of course he would be kind. When he was not at his job of forcing confessions he was always decent and obliging.

The couple walked quietly through the sinister street, but at the turn of the corner Rabia slipped down on to a doorstep and, putting her head on her knees, began to sob The dwarf leaned over her, patting her shoulder. The passers-by took her for a beggar, using a dwarf to arouse their compassion A few offered money. That quickly put an end to her sobs.

33

A FORTNIGHT after Tewfik's arrest Hilmi returned from Beirut. His future brother-in-law met him on the quay with an official from his father's Department. The horses of his mother's carriage were impatiently digging their hooves into the broken pavement. Bilal greeted him with some reserve.

"What is the matter with you, Bilal? Is anyone ill at home?"

"All is well, sir. Will you get into the carriage while we fetch your luggage?"

Hardly had the two disappeared when Shevki appeared among the crowd, and taking Hilmi's arm, pushed him into the carriage. Having closed the door, he began to talk. In a few words he explained the situation, told him of Tewfik's arrest and the scene at the French Post-office. He was afraid lest Hilmi, led by sentiment, should give himself away. Tewfik had stood the test. He would never betray them. Hilmi, too, must keep his mouth shut. The letter which spoke of an imminent rising had put the Palace, and also Selim Pasha, in a savage mood. If Hilmi admitted that he was implicated, the Government would not rest until they had obtained from him the names of more active conspirators.

"No one," said Shevki, "can resist the fist of Muzaffer, 'the Eye-burster.' It is a miracle how Tewfik did. If you divulged your part it would mean the ruin of the revolutionaries who are keeping the ideal of freedom alive in the hearts of our youth."

Shevki's vehemence bewildered Hilmi. He had no time

to answer before coming to a decision, for the men had returned with the luggage. He sat with Shevki at his side and Bilal facing him, and they drove for a time in silence. Hilmi was overwhelmed by the suddenness of the blow; he was hot and ashamed of his ugly position. He said, speaking to himself;

"But honour, honour demands . . ."

He couldn't finish the sentence. Shevki's hand was on his mouth.

"Honour is an empty name for the satisfying of petty personal vanity when a great cause is concerned," Shevki said scathingly.

Bilal looked at him, affected by the fire and conviction in the harsh, dark face. His lips moved, and he repeated the sentence to himself, memorising it.

Hilmi hardly shook the hand which Shevki gave him at the door of the Konak He was in a hurry to reach his mother's room. Once there he was astonished to hear her repeat Shevki's sentiments, though in a more symbolic and human form. Hardly had she inquired about Durnev's health or embraced him when she launched into an account of Tewfik's arrest. She looked haunted, beside herself with some secret anxiety. She mumbled:

"Tewfik is supposed to have accomplices, so far he has refused to give their names Somebody ought to warn them, tell them to keep out of reach"

She was shivering Why this terror at the possible fate of Tewfik's accomplices? Did she suspect the truth?

"Do you know who they are, Mother?" he asked with a ghastly smile.

"No, no, I don't want to know. I mustn't. I pray day and night for their safety. It would be of no use to Tewfik if they gave themselves up. Only more women, mothers and wives children too, would be suffering. More homes would be

broken up." She groaned; she was actually weeping. Her old arms were wound tightly round his neck. She was afraid to release him. Afraid lest Hilmi should give the secret away.

"Don't, don't. . . ."

He gently disengaged her arms from his neck and looked at her face, swollen and aged, disfigured with worry and tears. The mask of make-up on the flabby cheeks gave her the air of a fine building too old to hold another coat of paint, too dilapidated for anyone to restore. The usually bright young eyes had grown dim and stupid with fear. It went to his heart, that strange old face, the face he loved best in the world.

"Oh, mother, mother!" he said, the blood draining out of his cheeks. Without asking him in so many words, she had begged him to sacrifice the thing he had believed in with every fibre of his being. Shevki's appeal had reached only his mind; hers was a human appeal. It reached his heart.

A young servant announced that the Pasha was in his room and desired Hilmi's presence. He walked out of her room, bent like an old man.

Outside her room he admitted that a confession on his part would be of no use to Tewfik. Why burden other mothers with sorrow, including his own? His impulse might be nothing but vanity. Yet was it his mother's pain and the security of his comrades or his own innate horror of brutal treatment which forced him to keep silent? Was he, after all, a coward? His thoughts were vague and confused. He shuddered at the thought of violence and brutality.

"Is violence an inevitable historical force?" he was asking himself. Was anything ever done without the use of violence? Sultan after Sultan had used it, either to enforce new ideas or to prevent their influx. Perhaps it was so all the world over. Now that the glorified and idealised West. . . . He had talked of the culture and progress of France in a heated

[illegible] while he drank iced sherbets. Was the Great Revolution only a thing of beautiful ideas? He tried to visualise France during the Great Revolution. What an effect it must have had on the women! He could see mothers with swollen faces and dumb, fearful eyes all over the world.

What would the Young Turks do if they ever managed to overthrow the Hamidian regime? Why, Shevki was one of them: he was more representative of the revolutionary organisation than Hilmi. Yet Shevki, who was struggling so passionately against the brutality of the present regime, was even more cruel than Hilmi's father. The individual seemed to be in a vicious circle, forced to countenance violence if he were not actually obliged to use it himself. He had never felt so isolated, so miserable in mind and heart. And he remembered the sneering voice of Peregrini saying:

"The world is an arena in which God, the Devil, and their followers reign, fighting for supremacy. If you wish to be in the fray you have to enlist in the one camp or the other."

Except lunatics and freaks, everyone attached himself to a camp and fought for it. Even his father, even such young men as Shevki, with their accumulated hatred of the old regime, believed that their particular brutal instincts were saving and regenerating instincts.

His mind befogged, his eyes red, Hilmi entered his father's room. Selim Pasha had never looked more self-possessed. The Pasha understood from the dazed look of his son that he had already heard of Tewfik's arrest and was profoundly affected by it.

The Pasha pointed to a seat, and without inquiring after his daughter-in-law's health or Hilmi's voyage, began with ruthless directness to hammer home the facts. He drew a picture of Tewfik, the poor man who had suffered for the sins of a cowardly villain.

"There may be more than one man behind Tewfik, and

what then?" said Hilmi.

"They should all come forward and confess their guilt."

"Supposing they do not believe it to be guilt?"

"No such supposition is possible."

"Why not? Can't you see that to some the service of the Sultan would in itself be a guilty act?" There was irony in Hilmi's voice.

"What, what?" roared Hilmi's father.

"Let us suppose for a minute that it is so."

"I won't. There is one right and one wrong. I am in the right. Do you by any chance know who are the villains behind Tewfik? Is it possible that you are one of them?"

"I should deem it a greater villainy to torture such a helpless man as Tewfik than to take shelter behind him."

"Answer my question."

"I won't. You can believe what you wish to believe."

"If I believed it, you would be where Tewfik is now. But you have not the grit of that clown--that fellow masquerading in women's clothes! Had you been in his place you would have begged for mercy, disclosed the names of all your accomplices . . . you rabbit-hearted, bloodless cad . . . you despicable coward!"

The bonds of blood were broken, the authority of a father over his son was gone. They were man to man; the older with his hands at his sides, looking as though he thought the younger too contemptible to strike, the younger marching towards his senior with hand upraised.

Neither had seen the old woman standing at the door, leaning on a stick. Sabiha Hanim had been there for the last two minutes. Her voice woke the two men to the ugly reality of their position.

"I want to speak to your father, Hilmi; leave the room!" she said. There was nothing helpless in her voice now.

Hilmi could have struck his father, but her he obeyed.

34

"I BELIEVE that I have checked the smuggling of seditious literature through the foreign Post-offices. No Turk goes there now," said Selim Pasha to the First Chamberlain.

"So Tewfik refused to the end to give the names of his associates. After all, there may not have been any . . ." the First Chamberlain remarked.

"No, sir, if you knew him you would not say that."

"Zati Bey declares that Tewfik has been poisoning the minds of the young by his impersonations of important persons. The fellow must be pretty shrewd to do that."

"Zati Bey is sensitive to allusions about drunkenness and the rest. From time immemorial all acting on the Turkish stage, even in the puppet shows, has contained such allusions. No Tewfik is shielding someone."

The First Chamberlain did not reply, and the Pasha continued:

"The fellow has the heart of a woman; he understands nothing about a man's sacred duties to his country. I have tried to make him see that the individual is an ant compared to the State, and that we do not mean to hurt poor helpless individuals unless the State requires it."

Selim Pasha stopped. There was no comment. He resumed his soliloquy with greater emphasis.

"I realise now why we have been such a great nation in the past. Our State was a huge well-ordered mill; individuals were the grains which the mill ground to one size. No individual, not even the Sultan, could claim a personal right which was of more importance than the State. Each individual was the unconditional slave; the ruler was a symbol."

"What makes you worry about these questions, Pasha?"

Selim Pasha wiped his face. He had an uncontrollable desire to pour out his thoughts and his grievances to the First Chamberlain.

"It is Tewfik, I believe, who has completely destroyed my peace of mind. I can't place him. There is something of the woman in him. You cannot call him brave; you cannot even call him a man, nor can you call him a coward. I have come to the conclusion that, though you can bully a man who lacks courage, you cannot bully a man with the heart of a woman. He makes me think of my wife, makes me puzzle over her qualities. If the Sultan made her Prime Minister, she could wield the affairs of the Empire more intelligently than does the present holder of the office. Yet the moment her duty interfered with her motherhood, she would smash fifty States, she would turn the universe upside down she would undergo any tortures, simply for the sake of her son."

"The morality of love." The First Chamberlain smiled. "That may be the ruling force in human institutions some day. I hope so."

Selim Pasha's already lean face had become almost cadaverous. The bones of his eagle-like head stood out in sharp lines. His skin had assumed a greenish hue, and two hectic spots burned on his high cheek-bones.

"Love! I don't want to hear the word. Everyone is united in a common hatred against me. My son nearly raised his hand to me, to me, his father! I can see that he is very much upset by Tewfik's arrest and his heroic silence. Whenever I give a detailed account of the man's behaviour, Hilmi can hardly control himself. I don't do it for pleasure, he ought to realise that to hound my own son, to try to wring a confession from him, is also a heroic act. He ought to respect me at least for that. No, he even called me a villain. There is his mother, nearly a cripple; she is utterly heart-broken,

yet she says not a word. There is Tewfik's daughter, the girl whom I have brought up and cared for like a daughter; she avoids me too, she refuses to come to my house. Even my old neighbours, people of every age and of both sexes, evacuate the street when my carriage appears. I might as well be the plague in person rather than a human being."

The First Chamberlain had risen. His sympathies for the moment were on the other side. Oh, that poor young daughter of Tewfik's! . . . The First Chamberlain knew more about her than Selim Pasha dreamed of. Vehbi Effendi had set him to work tactfully but quietly behind the scenes.

"I think the time has come for you to make your suggestions concerning the arrested persons," he said.

"I have already done so," answered Selim Pasha, offering a big envelope which in a strong and regular hand was addressed to His Majesty.

35

ON Wednesday Selim Pasha went to the Palace to receive his last instructions.

The First Chamberlain read out the notes dictated to him by his royal master. First the list of officials, some important and some petty; then a considerable number of young students, medical and military. Whether the rising mentioned in the letter discovered on Tewfik had been frustrated by timely interference, or whether the letter was a hoax, no one could tell. Those men, however, whose names were mentioned in the letter were to be exiled. His Majesty's mind could not rest while they were at large.

Selim Pasha felt no compunction in compelling the condemned persons to leave their hearths and homes and go into an exile that had no time-limit. What were a few individuals compared to the peace of mind of the Sultan—the mind that symbolised the State?

Tewfik was to be exiled to Damascus. Confined to the city, but free to do in it as he pleased. It sounded as if he had been singled out. Selim Pasha was pleased, but also perplexed. The rest were to be sent to the Tripolitan desert.

"His Majesty thinks it advisable that your son Hilmi Bey should also be sent to Damascus. He has an unwholesome taste for revolutionary literature. In deference to your valuable services, Hilmi Bey will be known as the Honorary Assistant to the Governor. He will be under observation and not free to leave the city—not until another Imperial decree gives him permission to do so."

Selim Pasha listened, saying nothing. His conscience was slightly relieved. The others had had nothing proved against

them. All the same, his throat was dry.

"All of them must leave to-morrow, as early as possible. On Friday, when the Sultan goes to the mosque, they must be far out on the open sea. They are to be sent on the steamship *Glory of the Sea*. The boat will put in at Beirut to land your son and Tewfik, and then proceed to Tripoli with the rest."

Selim Pasha offered no comment.

"You will want to give some preliminary orders, and notify the families of the exiled. None of their relations are to accompany them, but they may see their relatives on the boat before it starts. This must be before the city awakes. His Majesty believes that you will see that the affair is conducted without any unpleasant incident."

"His Majesty's orders shall be carried out," said Selim Pasha. He salaamed and walked to the door. The First Chamberlain accompanied him.

"Draw up a list of men for promotion. For you a greater honour is reserved."

The First Chamberlain put a pale hand on the sturdy shoulder of the Pasha. In his eyes and voice was something which reminded Selim Pasha vaguely of Vehbi Effendi—that familiar softness from within.

"We are all shadows moving on the face of the waters. Don't take it too much to heart. You son is also a shadow and must move on his way."

There was irony and grimness on Selim Pasha's firm mouth.

"Decidedly not a shadow for his mother, sir."

An absurd gesture of Hilmi's mother flitted before his eyes. She had a way of putting her hand into Hilmi's collar to find out whether he were too hot and perspiring. Every evening when he came back from the office she did it, and at the least sign of moisture she ordered a change of linen and made him drink a cup of lime-flower tea.

Driven by the fine black pair prancing through the [illegible] dusty road, winding round and round the pine groves [illegible] hyacinth fields, the Pasha departed from the Yildiz Palace. He reached his office, where he began at once to execute the Sultan's orders.

The *Glory of the Sea*, that tired old vessel, must be got ready to put out to sea. Her captain, who was probably drinking deep in some pub in Galata, her first mate, who was making merry in a disreputable establishment in the same district, and her crew, who were scattered in minor pubs and houses of ill fame, had to be gathered together and all that within a few hours.

It was done. But the achievement gave him no joy. He was thinking of Hilmi. True, Damascus was a beautiful city, and his son was perhaps receiving less than his share of punishment. But there was his mother. . . . Good God! how was he to face his wife?

As soon as he reached the Konak he sent for his son.

"His Majesty has appointed you Assistant Governor of Damascus," he announced without any preliminaries.

"I have no wish for the honour. I shouldn't know how to do the work. Ask His Majesty to excuse me," answered Hilmi, in a sullen tone.

"You won't have anything to do—it is as much a sinecure as your post in the Finance Department. I am afraid you must go, whether you want to or not."

"A kind of exile reserved for the sons of the rich," Hilmi sneered.

"Thank the Lord five times a day that you are a son of the rich. The others are going to Fezan."

"Where is Tewfik going?"

"To Damascus."

What a relief! He could explain to Tewfik. He could atone for his careless act in sending the poor devil to the French

... a sneak and a coward he had considered ... days! Aloud he said:

... do we start?"

... send you to-morrow on a launch. A cabin will be ... for you."

... is the name of the boat?"

... *Glory of the Sea*."

... sick crossing to Kadi-Keuy; how can I sail on ...? Can't you let me travel on a Messagerie? I would ... with me. I give you my word of honour that ... to escape."

... was looking out of the window. Hilmi con-

... there is mother to be considered—one must ... it. She will eat her heart out if she knows I ... nasty old ... in the stormy season."

... must be ... exceptions," said his father drily. ... turned abruptly his face to his son: "What is the ... that ship? For the last twenty years it has been ... soldiers and exiles to Yemen."

... turned to leave the room in silence.

"I shall ... you before you go, Hilmi."

"... don't think so; I must say good bye to my friends."

... cannot leave the house. You will go straight to the ...

"... then we shall meet in my mother's room."

The ... weakling had suddenly acquired a certain ... and dignity. Selim Pasha's mind was once more ... visions . . . his wife making that doting maternal gesture. Her pretty white hand was fondling Hilmi's neck ... whether he were overheated, whether he needed a change of linen and some lime-flower tea.

"Hadn't you better leave without telling her? . . . I will explain."

"I want her blessing before I go," said Hilmi simply.

"You will be needing money." The old man had turned to a cabinet and was opening a drawer in which he kept some cash in readiness. He did not see the hatred, the mortification and pain in the eyes staring at his back. He was occupied with his own struggle. He must kiss that boy before he left, his only son! He had a vision of autumn gales and that hulk . . . yes, when the boy kissed his hand, he in turn would kiss him on both cheeks, rigidly, firmly, giving him profitable advice and his blessing. He turned from the cabinet and offered Hilmi a fat red purse. The sight of it brought a wild glitter into his son's eyes.

"I don't want your money," he hissed. "Consider me a stranger henceforth!" Without other farewell, with not so much as a glance, he left the room, closing the door behind him as quietly as if a dead body lay there.

The red purse scorching his fingers, Selim Pasha stood in the middle of the room. Never had he felt so wronged; yet he was not angry, he was only miserable. Though he had often felt provoked to chastise Hilmi, he had not done so; he had even felt provoked to disown his son—but he had not done so. Only a few minutes ago he had been considering how long His Majesty's anger against Hilmi would last. Never had there been such a foolish father, and such an ungrateful son. The rabbit-hearted, bloodless youth had stood up to him and disowned him . . . him, the Pasha! He was mortified, humiliated. Yet in some secret corner of his mind was the anxiety over the autumn gales. He went to the window and drew the curtain, peering into the night and listening for the rise of the wind. No, it was a balmy night, starry, blue, calm. Not enough breeze to dry a woman's handkerchief.

36

THE city of Istanbul slept heavily. The translucent, misty atmosphere was still white, with pearly tints, as yet without the blush of dawn. The myriads of turrets veiled by the white haze, the grey-blue waters, motionless as a polished mirror, were not yet awake.

On the Galata Quay a dozen darkly-clad figures stood listening to the faint sounds from the city or gazing at the unwieldy barges by the quay. The men at the oars were staring back at them. The noise of hooves and wheels grew in volume. A string of closed carriages arrived and drew up on the quay. The darkly-clad men opened the doors, and other darkly-clad men, sitting by the drivers, jumped down. They pulled out a number of women in black bundle-like clothes some with babies in arms, a few old men, a few small girls and boys. The sombre crowd kept together, most of them holding hands. Those whose hands were occupied with babies or baskets kept in touch, shoulder to shoulder, seeking support from one another. They were shuffled into the barges. Oars splashed on the sleepy waters; the barges moved out towards the pearly mist on the grey-blue sheen of the lifeless expanse. They rowed towards the *Glory of the Sea*, a tiny black speck anchored far out, in front of the four-towered Selimieh Barracks.

In the bottom of one of the large barges Rabia was squatting. She was squeezed on all sides. They were like sardines in a box. She could see the few scowling faces of the darkly-clad men sitting in the stern of the barge. Only they had room enough to stretch their limbs. For the first time in her life Rabia had pulled down her thick black veil over her

face. She couldn't tell why she did this. However, it was evidently a feeling shared by all the women in the barges. They all belonged to the class which moves about with unveiled faces. Yet every one of them had felt the need of concealing her face. Rabia could see that the shoulders of the younger women were shaking under their shabby draperies. The older women sat rigidly, their arms round the shaking shoulders. From under their thick veils they were staring at the darkly-clad figures in the stern of the barge. In front of Rabia there was a bowed thin black back. A boy about three, with blue beads sewn on his fez, sat beside the woman. From the way she was bending forward Rabia could guess at the existence of a baby asleep under the long black cape.

The silence, broken only by the splash of the oars, stifled Rabia. The fleet of barges with their sorrow-stricken, dumb human cargo seemed to be rowing out into eternity. She was almost relieved when she heard an old man from another barge utter a strange cry. He was the grandfather of one of the medical students to be exiled. He kept on mumbling to himself in incomprehensible distress. This was a signal for the boy at her side to start howling. The mother leaned over and whispered: "Shuuuuuut! Look at the black bogey, it will eat you if you cry!" The child's mouth froze in its yelling posture, and his eyes stared in terror at the men sitting in the stern of the barge. When Rabia caught sight of Rakim she closed her eyes under her black veil. The dwarf was hugging the food-baskets they were taking to Tewfik. His eyes were wide open; the dumb pain in their depths was like the pain of a child monkey.

The barges at last reached the exile ship. The crowd scrambled up a rickety rope-ladder, helped by barefooted, bareheaded sailors. Old men swayed, women clutched at any support, the boys climbed up like monkeys, and the girls whimpered.

At the top of the ladder a sailor swore in husky and lusty tones. It was a masterpiece of swearing. It had the vigour of a sailor's oaths, and the originality and richness of a Turk's objurgations. It was directed against those who had dragged helpless babes and poor women out of their beds at such an hour; it was directed against those who had scattered the hapless and innocent Moslems into the four cursed corners of the earth.

The swearing was infinitely comprehensive. It was uttered by a sailor who had been on the *Glory of the Sea* for twenty years. He had witnessed these heart-breaking scenes of farewell almost every year. The boat did nothing but carry exiles to Yemen or to Tripoli. His objurgations included the ancestor of every tyrant. They went back into the past until they reached the first, the original father of man. They did not spare the future progeny of those who exiled and persecuted their fellows. They reached out to the future, not forgetting the relatives of all the world's tyrants, and arrived at the millennium, when governments and rulers would cease from troubling the down-trodden, weary human masses.

Though this language was doubtless aimed at the Sultan and his Ministers, its adequacy was such that the darkly-coat men neither stopped nor arrested the sailor. After all, had they not received the order to see that this final leave-taking passed off without any unpleasant incident?

On the deck, when the boil and bubble of the crowd had a little subsided, Rabia caught sight of the young woman with the baby and the little boy. She was squatting by the rail, her back to the crowd, the baby still in her arms. By her side a thin, youngish man in the worn-out clothes of a poor official had put his hand on her shoulder and was caressing it timidly. On his back rode the boy, his fat arms tight round his father's neck, his muddy old shoes beating

his father's shins. His blue beads, sewn on to the tassel of his fez to avert the evil eye, jigged furiously up and down as he shook his head with the joy of one who is riding a restive horse.

Against the grey background of the mist a young medical man stood rigidly. The old man, who had wailed so dismally while on the barge, was shuffling round and round, touching the boy's cheek with his skinny fingers.

"Now, now, grandfather, be quiet! I shall be back next Bairam!"

But the old man's skinny fingers trembled in the air, and his long beard shook. He was mumbling curses:

"May the tyrants be exterminated by Allah . . . may their hearths be extinguished and planted with fig-trees, may their eyes be blinded, may their hearts burn and break. . . ."

The sailor who had sworn so lustily was now going about with a broken pitcher, serving water to fainting women, tickling the babies, cracking jokes with everybody. But where was Tewfik?

Rabia saw him at last. He was holding a baby for a young woman, who in turn was putting a piece of flannel on the back of an embarrassed middle-aged man. She was small and plump, and talked all the time, giving instructions to her husband as to how to keep warm on the deck at night.

Tewfik had grown an untidy beard, and had purple patches below his eyes. At the sight of Rabia he nearly dropped the baby, but the father and daughter managed to embrace with the baby between them. A hoarse, commanding voice, that of the captain, shouted.

"In ten minutes you must start back for the shore: now then, hurry, and pass up the bundles!"

Vehbi Effendi stood against the railing while Rakim, with beads of perspiration trickling down his face, dragged forward the basket and bundle which he had brought for

Tewfik. Rabia worked quickly, putting down a piece matting and preparing a place for Tewfik. No one could t how long the voyage would last. The fat little woman w doing the same.

Rabia thrust a knotted handkerchief into Tewfik's breas pocket. It contained the takings of the last month. "I' brought stuffed vine-leaves and rose-petal jam, Tewfi The basket is full of meat, bread, cheese. Write fro Damascus as soon as you get there," Rabia was saying.

"Am I going to Damascus?" he asked. No one had bee told anything, and rumour spoke of Fezan and Yemen, tl classical places of exile. But Vehbi Effendi had come to tl shop, and to relieve the tension of Rabia's mind he had to her the truth. At his suggestion she had been kept busy pr paring food for Tewfik all night long. And it was he wl had found a carriage for them and brought them to the qu and the boat.

The arrival of a steam-launch brought the captain alo once more, and the bugle-like voice shouted another con mand:

"Say good-bye, get into the boats!"

The darkly-clad men appeared on the deck and hurrie and hustled the women-folk. Another agitated human wa tossed and surged along the deck. The boy riding on h father's back yelled, and Vehbi Effendi turned to sootl him. The thin, timid official was blessing him. He begge the Dervish to take charge of his family on the way bacl With trembling hands he tightened the knot of the kerchi under the baby's chin. He blurted out to Vehbi Effend "Another is coming," and broke down.

Vehbi Effendi, with his spiritual face and his gentle bu unobtrusive helpfulness, had captured the imagination c the crowd. A surge of emotion had turned him into a sain He was a divine messenger sent to comfort them. Didn

such messengers always appear in the garb of a Dervish?

"Oh, Dervish, let thy prayers be with us. . . . Oh, Dervish, protect our little ones, intercede for us in Heaven. . . ."

The crying women were now in the barges. More shuffling of feet, more yells and imprecations. The crowd to which Rabia belonged had been hustled out of the *Glory of the Sea*. The men on deck waved a last good-bye. A pyramid of faces, a waving of handkerchiefs, and among them all Tewfik's face. Rabia once more pulled her black veil over her face.

The water was rippling and gurgling under the oars; a blue-grey light, with gay, golden shafts of sunshine, played on the waves. The Islands, huge and purple, resembled prehistoric animals having their morning drink. The semicircular port of Istanbul had caught the roseate glory of the rising sun.

The barges moved towards the port. The silence of the crowd was heavier now. They were praying, and at last a soft chorus of "Amin, amin" broke the silence.

"I saw Hilmi Bey in the boat. What was he doing there?" asked Rakim.

"He is exiled too, and is going to Damascus, that is good, for it means he will be with Tewfik," said Vehbi Effendi.

Rabia's heart, which had felt drained of all feeling, woke.

"Oh, can't they take me with them as a servant?"

Vehbi Effendi looked away; Rakim made a poor attempt to be cheerful.

"Tewfik asked me about his paper puppets—I suppose he wanted to start a shadow-play on the boat."

Dolphins were rising, tumbling over each other, rollicking and frolicking over the waters.

"The shadows shift," Vehbi Effendi smiled.

37

PEREGRINI haunted the shop after Tewfik's exile. He was unable to see Rabia for a whole month. Rakim was always alone in the shop. He told Peregrini that there were women neighbours upstairs in Rabia's room. They would be indulging in reminiscences of Tewfik, driving the poor girl crazy with their continual talk. However, Rakim told him that she was bearing her trouble with courage and calmness. Peregrini dreaded their first meeting, so that he was almost grateful for the incidental obstacles which postponed his seeing Rabia. The dwarf himself was changed. He gave one the impression of a real man facing heavy responsibilities. Even his diminutive stature had acquired a new dignity. Never had he been so full of ingenious ideas, or bubbling over with humour. Yet one might gather from the strange sadness in the depths of his brown eyes that he was sorely stricken by the loss of his old friend. However, the idea that he was now in charge of Tewfik's daughter had given him strength. For the first time in his life he was able at times to forget his painful and humiliating dwarf-complex. Peregrini realised that the pigmy was an old hand at dealing with human beings, whether glad or sorrowful. So much the better for Rabia.

"Pembeh is keeping Rabia's hands busy sewing, preparing a winter outfit for Tewfik, and I keep her mind busy with other things. Why don't you come in some evening and see her? The neighbours have exhausted all they had to say about Tewfik, and they leave her alone now, at least in the evenings."

"I will call to-morrow evening after supper," said Pere

grini, and he added: "Pembeh's settling down with you after Tewfik's departure has been a good thing."

"It has!" replied Rakim, shaking his head.

When Peregrini first came face to face with Rabia after the episode of her father's exile, the misery and heartache due to Tewfik's indefinite absence had greatly abated. Though she had developed a sore throat—owing to gulping down her tears, according to Rakim—she had begun to smile sadly at Rakim's jokes about their neighbours.

Peregrini found her sitting on a stool by the grate in the kitchen. Pembeh and Rakim were toasting their hands on the brazier. There was a cold wind outside, the first autumn gale. Bathed in the yellow light of the lamp hanging from the ceiling, the place had a cozy and familiar air.

The girl rose when he entered. He noticed that she wore a narrow head-band which neatly framed her face. It emphasised the delicacy of her features, and in the white muslin head-veil, thrown loosely over her smoothly-parted hair, she reminded him of a young nun. He thought she looked ill. Round her eyes were purple rings, while on her cheeks burned two round feverish spots. A crooked smile lifted one corner of her mouth. He took her hand and found it hot.

"You are not at all well."

She pulled her hand back and pointed to her throat.

"Tonsils," she said in a throaty voice.

"Have you seen a doctor?"

"I have applied hot mashed olives to her throat," said Pembeh, indicating the band around Rabia's head. "I shall give her hot lime tea and cover her well up to-night. There is nothing the matter. Come and sit by the brazier."

They gave him a stool near them, but the girl returned to her seat by the grate. She sat on it limply, her hands hanging motionless at her sides. When Pembeh made and served

coffee and the three of them began to smoke, Rakim looked at Rabia.

"You should smoke too, Rabia. . . . It makes one forget one's cares and troubles. After all, you are an old maid, over seventeen! Phew!"

Peregrini looked at the girl. The crooked smile at one corner of the pleasant mouth deepened, while the other corner retained its melancholy droop. He missed the fascinating crinkle on the nose and the network of lines that came and went round the golden eyes when she laughed. Although the facial muscles were trying to frame a smile at the corner of the mouth, the eyes were far away, she was listening to the wind outside the door.

"Do you think this wind will make the sea rough?" she asked.

"It is invariably smooth this month on the Mediterranean," Peregrini assured her.

Her features relaxed. She leaned down and picked up a note-book from the floor at her side and began to study it.

"The crisis has evidently passed," she remarked.

"It has," answered Rakim, and he explained the nature of the crisis to Peregrini. The first fortnight after their trouble custom had fallen off. The neighbours had kept a watch on the shop, afraid to come near it lest there should be spies stationed in the street, trying to note down the names of those who entered Tewfik's shop. But there were no spies about, so they had all come back. Custom was even better than in the past, because the Konak was buying almost everything from them.

"The poor cannot afford the luxury of brooding over their troubles; the business of living demands sharp wits and undivided attention," the dwarf declared, pointing to his stomach. "Difficult to satisfy this black and greedy cavity; it never stops crying for food until the day it is choked with dust."

"What would you have done if the customers hadn't returned?" Pembeh asked.

"There is one unfailing job for the man who fails in every other trade—begging. A beggar is the most opulent person in this land, provided he knows all the tricks of the game."

"What is there to know?" Peregrini asked.

"Not as easy as it seems," Rakim chuckled. "The first requisite is a maimed child, a nasty, crying child which you carry in your arms. You have no idea how many innocents are crippled for the purpose. If you lack that, you must either feign or actually have a crooked, crippled body. Blindness is another asset for a beggar."

"Shut up," snapped Pembeh. "You don't need any extra make-up. The Almighty has sent you down on earth ready-made to draw tears and alms."

"Don't I? Much you know about it!"

In an instant Rakim had changed, so that he was almost unrecognisable. With a stroke of his fingers he had thrust his turban over on one side, while the eyebrows had become shaggy. From one eye tears rolled down his cheek, while the other remained closed; it was apparently dead and blind. His one good leg had become crooked, while he dragged himself along on a paralytic foot, chanting, in a doleful whine: "For the souls of your dead, in the name of the Prophet and His four selected Companions, for the safety and sake of the eyes of your beloved—alms!"

"Stop that, Uncle! It hurts me so. . . . I feel sorry I have refused Selim Pasha's offer of help."

"You should never refuse the money of the rich. They live on the sweat of our brows. . . . Well, if the customers hadn't come back I should have considered begging on the bridge as the next best trade suited to my talents."

"No more croaking, Rakim. It saddens Rabia. Vehbi Effendi has promised to find pupils for Rabia; she can teach

them music; and Ramazan is not so far away. She earns enough in that Holy month. Besides, there is me; my belly is still springy. I can always dance!" She patted her belly dreamily.

"Forty-five . . . no, Auntie, your belly is too ancient for shaking."

"If I hadn't eaten pilaff I would have proved the contrary, you nasty dwarf!"

"That is right, Black Girl. Act as if the bird Phoenix is perched on the top of your head!"

"Have you seen Vehbi Effendi?" Peregrini asked, by way of changing the subject.

"Yes, he was here this morning. He tells me that we might expect a letter from Beirut any time."

"Shall you go on with your music lessons?"

"I don't think so. As Auntie told you, Vehbi Effendi is going to find pupils for me to teach."

"What about your chanting?"

"Well, it is only in Ramazan that one gets jobs really worth while. In the meantime we must help Tewfik to settle in Damascus. And I may begin Mevlut-chanting. The birth-song of the Prophet is chanted in every house when someone dies."

"Just as doctors pray for sickness, so do the Mevlut-chanters pray for deaths," said Rakim, by way of being funny.

As Peregrini took his leave he retained the girl's hand for a moment in his and patted it paternally. She did not withdraw it, and her eyes responded gratefully to the grave pity and tenderness which flooded his own.

Once in the street, he was aching to enter the enchanted circle of those who were privileged to help and to serve Rabia. He felt hopelessly out of it all. As Vehbi Effendi was the regulating force of the girl's life, he would go and see him the very next morning.

38

NOT very far from the monastery of the Dancing Dervishes was the cheery little back-street called the Black Hawk. All the houses were surrounded by gardens. Light bathed it at all times, unhindered by the low, wide eaves. Early in the morning, flushed with the warm sunlight, it had a drowsy air. The street dogs curled at garden gates yawned and stretched, and a few raised a half-hearted bark as a man with a huge round tray filled with pastries on his head passed, crying, "Burek, burek."

Vehbi Effendi lived in one of the small houses, and the morning after his visit to the shop Peregrini knocked at his door. An elderly Dervish, who looked after Vehbi Effendi's bodily needs, opened the door. He was a dark man with a jovial face. After a friendly "Good morning" to the Italian he pointed to a window on the second floor of the house, and went back to his work in the garden.

Vehbi Effendi was seated on a freshly washed sheepskin in the middle of his bare room. The drawn calico curtain softened the glare. The sun, after the heavy rain and storm of the preceding night, was shining with midsummer glory, and the room was warm. And Vehbi Effendi enjoyed the warmth, for since the day Tewfik had left he had fasted almost continually, and fasting makes a man feel cold.

After that early morning among the exiles on the *Glory of the Sea* he had been beset by disturbing thoughts. It was not the first time that the sight of human sorrow had affected his serenity. To be in a chronic state of wanting to help an unhappy world was his mission in life. But when his mind began to question the divine scheme he regarded

such questioning as a symptom of spiritual sickness. His soul must be out of tune. He must at once begin to tune it. Therefore he must fast, detach himself from his mortal body, make an effort to reach the finer essence of being, subjugate the coarse husk of his soul, chastise it with every sort of self-denial.

"I am no longer a part of the eternal force of Creation; I am nothing but a miserable, isolated, purposeless vagabond spirit!" he said to himself. And during the night he remained on his knees, lost in contemplation, striving to escape from the world of sensory impressions. As the sky paled he rose, threw himself into his mystic dance, into the sound which was to concentrate his mind within his soul. For hours and hours the tall willowy figure of the man whirled round and round, establishing contact with a universe which consisted of a series of beats, a rhythm with specific laws. And so it had been night after night. Now he was on his sheepskin, still moving in an almost imperceptible rhythm. He was returning from a void, a rhythmically pulsing void. By the time Peregrini entered his room his soul was once more in tune with its own universe. He was a whole man.

"I see that you are hungry for talk, Peregrini. Your face and this early visit mean that. And I am hungry for food. My fast ends to-day."

He rose and stretched himself. Then he walked to the window and pulled back the curtain. He made signs to someone in the garden, tapping the window with his fingers.

When his attendant brought in a tray loaded with pasties and hot milk, Vehbi Effendi ate with evident enjoyment. And he spoke again after he had rolled a cigarette from his tobacco pouch and lighted it.

"You may unload your mind and heart now. What is it that troubles your mind?"

"Rabia."

"Rabia? What about her?"

"I saw her last night, and she was ill."

"And I saw her earlier in the day. She had a sore th
Has any complication developed?"

"I believe she takes her father's exile too much to he

"It is best not to fuss over the girl. Moral suffering is
bodily disease. It must be given time to cure itself. Inva
climax, then convalescence. . . ."

The voice had a slight warning significance. Pere
resented it.

"Why shouldn't I fuss over her? Haven't I known her
enough? Are we merely sheep separated from each oth
different pens?"

"No man is separated from another by any barrier."

"Isn't he, though? Nationality, creed, caste, and class
what are they if they are not barriers?"

"If you think so, why are you quarrelling with me?"

"Well, I feel that you object to my interest in Rab
have been in your land for ever so many years; I am n
one of you Yet there seems to be an unseen no-man's-
between us. . . . We may meet and become friends a
a neutralised moral frontier; it is a case of so far and
farther."

"I don't object to your interest in Rabia." And he sm
serenely as he watched the smoke curl out of his nos
"I object to your fussing. It is alien to our nature. You
too restless. I don't want you to communicate that to R
Let her be. Her mind is taken up with the necessit
supporting Tewfik in exile. In time she will go back to
peaceful occupations."

Peregrini said nothing for a time. He wondered whe
his excitement in respect of Rabia, his insistence on ming
in the girl's life, had appeared suspicious to the Dervish.

who was Vehbi Effendi to monopolise the girl in that way? Not only in the spiritual, but also in the earthly concerns of the girl this man with the face of a mediaeval saint reigned supreme. The man reminded him of his mother's confessor. A curious repetition of destiny! The two women to whom he was so deeply attached were both guarded by a religious authority. In his mother's case there was a breach which he could never leap. A chasm yawned between them. There was no sense in reviving painful memories. Would he be cut off from Rabia too? The thought made him sick. No, he couldn't face that. The girl represented his only human tie of importance in his new land of adoption. He couldn't break the tie without serious damage to his heart.

Vehbi Effendi watched his face and noted its tragic intensity.

"Why don't you get married, Peregrini? Celibacy is not a healthy state for everyone."

"I shall never marry."

"You are no longer a monk; I don't see why you shouldn't. Being a monk must have been totally unsuitable for a man of your temperament. I wonder whatever led you to become a monk?"

"Perhaps the fear of perdition. . . ." Peregrini smiled bitterly. "I was such a spout and good-for-nothing youth."

"Being an aristocrat. . . ."

"How did you know?"

"The aristocratic temperament does not vary according to country."

"You mean all aristocrats are egotistical, self-centred devils?"

"Perhaps." Vehbi Effendi was smiling sweetly. "You had better tell me the real reason for it, the thing that led you to the cloisters, and out of them."

"A long, long story. . . . It was my mother."

"Your mother? I thought women liked grandchildren."

"Mine wasn't a mother of that sort. If you had only seen her! Thin and tall, a cameo head, shoulders covered with black shawls, haunting the dim recesses of old churches. . . ."

"Lovely vision!"

"No doubt. But by the exactions of her religion and her love she destroyed me. Every single act was dictated by her Church. She was an orthodox, a very pious Catholic. She had no judgement of her own; allowed herself no opinion apart from that of her confessor." Peregrini stopped and looked at Vehbi fixedly for an instant. "To her money and position, fame and fortune, were as nothing; the Will of God as interpreted by her Church everything. She dreamed that I should attain holiness—that is, honour and rank in the world to come. Well, she had her dream for a time."

"Forced asceticism is another form of indulgence. You should never cut yourself off from your fellow-creatures until you have made quite sure that you can be of no use to them."

"It is a form of spiritual debauchery." Peregrini resumed the thread of his thoughts with increased bitterness. "An orgy of prayer, meditation, incense—unbridled indulgence in the emotions of the soul, all at the expense of your mind and body. I hate repressions. When I left the cloisters, fed up with the pleasures of the soul—just as I had been fed up with the pleasures of the flesh before I had entered them —it caused a lasting breach between my mother and myself. She could never forgive me; she would never forgive unless I went back to the cloisters once more. Let us forget all that."

Peregrini was silent for a while. When he spoke again there was a tone of appeal in his voice.

"After my mother, Rabia is the next great human interest in my life. I long to do things for her, to serve her, to help

to make her life a happier one. When you exclude that, I suffer. You seem to me like my mother's confessor."

He was pathetic; his eyes were dimmed with unshed tears, and the utter frankness of his confession was disarming. Vehbi Effendi stretched out his hand and patted Peregrini's knee.

"You may help and serve Rabia as much as you want. I have infinite confidence in your honesty of purpose. But I will be frank with you in turn. If you love her, or rather make her love you, you must marry her. I appeal to the real nobleman in you—don't trouble the peace of her mind."

"Would you really not object to my marrying Rabia?"

"Not at all. But you would have to become a Moslem. I don't like to connect you with the idea of changing one's religion for the sake of marriage."

Peregrini shook his head.

"I don't agree with you. When a man loves a woman even a change of religion is not too great a sacrifice. But I am not there yet. I confess that I would marry Rabia to-morrow if she accepted me without demanding a radical adjustment to her own environment. As it is I take your advice, and I will try to be content with the part of an old friend."

"You surprise me, Peregrini. Do you mean that you would take on the label of a new religion without really believing in it, merely for the purpose of marrying?"

"Yes. But not while my mother lives. There's no danger, however. She will outlive her son. But your question surprises me still more. You yourself are religious in the universal sense. Why should terms and denominations trouble you?"

"True . . . provided that there really is religion—that is, belief in God; and you do not believe in anything."

"Who knows?" said Peregrini, looking away.

"Your mother? I thought women liked grandchildren."

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39

THREE long weeks passed after Peregrini's interview with Vehbi Effendi. The period was marked by a complete lull in Rabia's daily life. Nothing of importance happened. Neither Vehbi Effendi nor Peregrini called at the shop. What had happened to them? She was impatient to get pupils to teach; she was longing for a first engagement to chant the Mevlut. Apart from the material benefit, she was interested in the new expression which Mevlut-chanting would give to her art. She thought, also, of the very pleasant evening they had spent in Peregrini's company. Apart from her study of the Prophet's "Birth Song," for the purpose of giving it what she thought would be an original musical setting, and the inspection of Rakim's accounts in the evenings, she found life an extremely dull business. The fatalist in her had taught her to endure Tewfik's loss; it also helped her to abide the uneventful flow of time. Patience, which had characterised her from her earliest infancy, was her principal strength and stay.

Pembeh shared Rabia's room at night. After spreading their beds on the floor the gypsy lay awake watching the girl go through her prayers. It took her a long while, and it disturbed Pembeh's rest, but it also interested her. The girl's patience in going through that long ritual proved to her once more the lack of common sense outside the gypsy clan. She herself was too lazy to pray for anything. In the first place, God was too highly placed in Heaven to listen to a poor gypsy's prayers. After all, what were the saints and the magicians for? She took candles to old tombs, and tied all manner of rags to the iron bars of the windows of shrines.

One came across those old shrines at every corner.

As a matter of fact, prayer meant wanting something from God. Surely it was the business of the Holy Dead to intercede for the living, and to procure the granting of their wishes? They would know exactly the right language to use in addressing God. And the living paid them back by keeping their dreary tombs lit up at night with ever so many candles. Pembeh also took cocks, and red sugar tied up with bright ribbons in coloured muslin, to fortune-tellers and sorcerers. They were in intimate touch with the spirits which haunt the abodes of the living and meddle in their earthly affairs. Their favour was easier to obtain. They were alive, though unseen, while the saints were dead, and remained in their tombs. One wasn't so sure of their getting out of their shrines to intercede in Heaven. She herself did not treat them with too much respect. She had often angrily shaken the bars of the "Tez Veren Dede" shrine because the saint who was supposed to accord one's wishes at once had failed her.

"You are an impostor!" she had said to the saint the last time. "The spirits do things quicker. I have gone on bringing you candles, asking you to make Tewfik marry me. You have sent him into exile instead. Here is a bit of rag out of his old shirt. I have given up the idea of marrying him; but make him come back soon, for Rabia's sake if not for mine!"

Perhaps there was something in the idea of praying for oneself. There was Rabia's tall shadow in her white nightgown, putting out the lamp and lighting the oil nightlight on the corner shelf. There she was, spreading her prayer-rug. Her slim shadow rose, bowed, knelt, and fell on its face. It rose tremulously, interminably repeating the same movements. The play of the girl's shadow fascinated Pembeh most when it knelt at the conclusion, the palms raised above the profile, the kneeling figure sharply outlined in black against the whitewashed wall. That was the finale, the last

personal communion of the individual with God. The hands remained lifted and the palms open to receive the divine bounty and grace for which the faithful prayed.

"Why does she stay in that fixed position so long? What is it that makes her nag God for everything?" Pembeh said to herself. Yet from the expression of the shadow-face she learned to read Rabia's moods. The girl was evidently going through all this ritual with no definite wish in her heart. There was a vague, tired look about her, yet the shadow-profile always smiled, and the shadow-hands fell on the shadow-knees when a deep "Amin" echoed through the silence, like a painfully drawn sigh. "Amin," repeated the gypsy, and began to talk drowsily to Rabia.

The girl had not at first welcomed Pembeh's attempts at conversation. She had either been huffy or had taken refuge in a stubborn silence. But of late she seemed to listen with more interest, and even made monosyllabic comments from time to time. And the gypsy invariably harped on the inmates of the Konak.

"Selim Pasha and his wife have not been on speaking terms since Hilmi Bey's exile."

"Everyone knows that in the Sinekli-Bakkal, Auntie."

"But they made it up last week. Sabiha Hanim is occupied with preparations for the wedding."

"So soon after her son's exile!"

"She had to do it. There were complications. The young slaves were getting much too excited over Bilal Bey: he is the only cock in the poultry-yard. Several cases of fainting-fits among the young girls. He is so handsome, and he acts the young master so much better than that womanish Hilmi Bey. Oh, he is showing them what's what in the Konak!"

"Despicable upstart! What does Mihri Hanim say?"

"She is always in tears; she doesn't sleep. Well, she should get married as soon as possible. She is the number one old

maid in the Sinekli-Bakkal."

Another spell of silence.

"Rabia, are you asleep?"

"What is it, Auntie?"

"Would you go to the wedding?"

"What a question! Didn't I tell you I wouldn't set foot there."

"But Sabiha Hanım is pining for you. She is going to sacrifice a ram at the Eyup shrine if you go to the wedding."

"What did she promise you to persuade me, Auntie?" This very ironically.

"A pair of long coral ear-rings," in an utterly unashamed tone from the gypsy.

"You are earning the ear-rings, Auntie. Let me sleep in peace, for God's sake."

The gypsy turned her face to the wall and slept. Rabia remained awake for a considerable time. When the Pasha's daughter married Bilal Rabia herself would be the number one old maid of the Sinekli-Bakkal. She would be eighteen in April, and there was no unmarried woman above fifteen in her street. But whom could Rabia marry? The only available bachelor for the moment was Mr Big-Brother. Rabia chuckled at the thought. Really, she could see no mate for her on the horizon, but in the depths of her subconscious mind there was and had always been a figure. A little man with a lined face and eyes that glowed like charcoal. And what hands! She visualised them working with that magic speed on the keys, making such lovely, such heart-stirring music. While anyone could make a single melody sing, those hands made ever so many tunes sing at once. Somewhere in her remote past she saw a girl of thirteen asking Sabiha Hanım eagerly

"What happens if a Moslem girl marries a Christian, Effendim?"

40

PEREGRINI walked briskly along the street of the Sinekli-Bakkal. He was triumphant; he was the bearer of good news to Rabia. He had found work for her, and he believed that he had at last stolen a march over Vehbi Effendi in doing her a good turn. When he saw her sitting at the counter instead of Rakim, the queer lines on his face deepened, creating that broad and genial grin which always disarmed the girl.

"Are *you* acting the grocer again?"

"Auntie is out and Rakim has not come back from the market. Where have you been? You've not come near our place for a whole month, you naughty, naughty Signor!"

Her pleasure shook him. The size of her eyes in her thin face, as they gleamed with joy at his visit, stirred him. His own eyes were hungry as he looked at her. The girl was a shadow. He could discern the spareness of her body under her loose robe. How sharp were her elbow-joints, and how devoid of roundness her limbs as they moved! Yet the almost emaciated purity of her contours gave them a sort of spiritual elegance. She was like a painting by a fourteenth-century master.

"Rakim will soon be back," she said, going towards the door. "You must come into the kitchen and have a cup of coffee with us. I am going to close the shop."

He helped her to pull down the shutters, and leaving the door half open he walked after her into the kitchen.

"I've found work for you."

"Have you?" The greenish specks of light in her golden eyes were kindled.

"I am Prince Nejat's music teacher. I suggested to him that he should have a trio of his slaves trained in Turkish music. He jumped at the idea. You are engaged. You will have to call on the Princess sometime in the week to arrange your days. I am so glad I thought of it first. You see, Vehbi Effendi is the Princess's music teacher, and he is always doing things for you."

The eternal boy in him, in spite of his greying hair and his premature wrinkles, charmed her. She laughed in her old way, with the fascinating crinkle on her nose, and he clapped his hands But in a moment her face fell.

"I am so afraid of palaces. . . ." She was associating palaces with her father's exile.

"You needn't be. You will find the Princess charming." His eyes twinkled; they looked as if they were keeping back some secret delight.

"You are not telling me all!"

"No, I'm not. You will find it out when you go to the Palace."

"This week has been wonderful. Vehbi Effendi got me my first engagement for Mevlut-chanting The chanter who did it every year for the First Chamberlain's house has died, and Vehbi Effendi has recommended me."

After all he, Peregrini, hadn't been the first to get her an engagement.

"The Prince lives at Bebek, not far from the First Chamberlain's house. I am his nephew's music master."

"Well, that is a marvellous coincidence! I am going there to chant on Thursday evening I shall naturally spend the night there, so I can easily call on the Princess the next morning."

She was now busy getting the coffee-cups from the shelf. She was moving swiftly, her print gown falling into the shapes of sculptured drapery. She kept her face turned to him as she talked, and he noted that her crooked smile was

no longer a trick of the facial muscles.

"I am a little scared about this Mevlut-chanting. I've always chanted in Arabic. The 'Birth Song' is in Turkish. I can't imagine religious music in any other language but Arabic."

"You can chant in any language. There is no other voice in the city which could match yours."

She seemed tremendously flattered by his appreciation. Her cheeks were like spring poppies, and she gave him a grateful look.

"You are going to be a beautiful woman, Rabia Hanim."

The daring remark made the bright red of her cheeks turn into the rich deep flush of a carnation. She was triumphant at his finding her good to look at. When she handed him the coffee he obeyed a wild impulse and kissed her hand before taking the cup. He felt her hand shake. Was she shocked? How could she know that such things were done in his country? He must do something to efface any impression of boldness on his part.

"I want you to be my little mother. . . . I miss mine so much these days."

The look that accompanied the remark was not like that of a son. She ignored it.

"I have not finished my news." She was changing the subject. "I had a letter from my father. He has reached Damascus."

"Really? Read it to me."

"Unfortunately I cannot. You see the letter came by hand, and it is full of news about Hilmi Bey. Auntie Pembeh took it to the Konak to show Sabiha Hanim. My father is living with Hilmi Bey. But he is trying to start a show. That means renting a shop in the bazaar. And all that means extra expense. You can imagine what these engagements mean to me."

He was already rising to take leave when the shrill voice of the dwarf called from the shop:

"Rabia, are you in the kitchen?

She too had risen. Before she could answer, Rakım burst into the kitchen. How glad he was to find Peregrini there! He had such a cheering effect on everyone. Anyone who had been talking to that unusual infidel looked as though he had been out in an exhilarating storm. No wonder the girl's cheeks were in flames, and her eyes like stars.

They did not expect the gypsy for supper that evening. She would dine with Sabiha Hanim. She had set out feeling very important with that letter in her bosom. Rabia's courteous act in sending her the letter would please Sabiha Hanim. Who knows—the girl might after all relent and go to the wedding! She was neither so gloomy nor so resentful as in the first weeks after Tewfik's exile. The Fates were smiling on the little shop once more.

Rabia's thoughts were elsewhere during the meal. When Rakım washed up and tidied the kitchen she did not offer to help. She sat on her usual stool, her eyes shining as at some mysterious vision. When they had sipped their coffee for a while, she asked:

"How much is the Mevlut-chanter paid exactly, Uncle?"

"As much as five pounds; that is, the best of them, of course."

"They wouldn't be paying me that much."

"Probably more; no Mevlut-chanter at the present time has such a voice as yours."

"That is true," she said with conviction, thinking of Peregrini's words. Then she added: "We can buy the best collection of leather figures for the shadow-play, and send them to Tewfik."

"Of course we can!"

"Now I will go up and look over the 'Birth Song.' "

He carried the brazier to her room, crawling in front of her like some strange animal. He lighted the lamp, placed the low desk beside it, and lighted the two customary candles on it.

When she covered her head with the white muslin and opened the book, poring over its yellow pages: "May I stay and listen?" he implored. "I won't make a noise."

"Wouldn't you prefer to remain in the kitchen and smoke? You couldn't smoke here, you know."

"No, I would rather be here, Rabia."

He climbed up to the divan, and sat there, his eyes wide open and fixed on Rabia. As he had once told Peregrini, he cared nothing for anything connected with religion. But the "Birth Song" was an exception. That simple and archaic Turkish song was a masterpiece; it gripped him. So he was forgoing his smoking for the sake of listening to it, and for the sake of looking at the girl. Like Peregrini, he too thought that she was a thing of beauty and joy, sitting and chanting behind the candles. No straight-limbed person could be so sensitive to beauty, and none perhaps could hide deep emotion behind light banter so successfully as he.

She had forgotten his presence. She was trying to strike out a new line for herself in this Mevlut-chanting. She would set her own "Birth Song", and she was going to sing the opening passage in the major for the first time. That sense of glory and achievement which the birth of a Prophet demanded could only be expressed in the major key. Then she would finish the death passage in the saddest and lowest minor key. It took her an hour, humming one tune after another, her eyes fixed on the pages. Her voice, in its strange quest, reminded the dwarf of the beat of a blind man's stick, feeling its way in unknown alleys. When she thought she had found the right musical expression she stopped, wiping her face with the edge of her head-veil.

"Why are you looking at me in that funny way, Uncle?"

"Because you have the most beautiful face which the Almighty has created."

"Peregrini told me something like that to-day."

He spat at an imaginary Peregrini, half in jest and half in spite.

"What does the pig know about beauty? The infidel dog! Their women are not good to look at."

"Aren't they?" She was laughing, her eyes screwed up and full of amusement.

"You must get married, and multiply your beauty, and . . and your voice."

"But no one wants me. I don't know that I want to get married, but I do want to have a child," she said, her voice breaking in the middle of the sentence.

Going over the soliloquy of Mohammed's mother in travail, chanting the words which Arab tradition ascribes to her, Rabia had forgotten that it referred to a prophet's birth. Its humanity had made her think of it as universal. A chord had been touched in her heart which vibrated passionately. She was like the finest string of a lute under the fingers of a master. She leaned over and read, rather than spoke, the opening lines. Her voice was so warm with yearning that Rakim felt a red-hot tongue of flame licking his spine. Strong emotion always affected him in that way.

"When the hour for the best of men to come and abide on earth was here, Emineh, the mother of Mohammed, said, 'I felt a thirst that parched my flesh. Then they held a goblet of sweet sherbet to my lips—whiter than snow, sweeter than the sweetest sugar was the drink. It whelmed me, it drowned me in a glory of light. I could no longer separate myself from the light.' "

Though touched by the passage, he growled: "I have heard women giving birth to babies. Anyone can hear their

screams from the street. They don't use such poetic language." But she went on, heedless of his cynical remark, her pupils dilated, her lips trembling: "The wings of a white bird stroked my back as I lay, and radiance clothed the earth and the firmaments—the Sultan of Faith was born."

She closed the book and chanted the words of welcome to the babe Mohammed in the major key which she had found at last:

Hail to Thee! Oh Sun of all lovers,
Hail to Thee! Oh Mercy to the worlds to come,
Hail to Thee! Oh Pleader for the fallen,
Hail to Thee! Oh Helper of the portionless!

Tears were running down Rakim's furrowed cheeks.

"Stop that, Rabia. I don't like it, it is melting my heart! Oh, oh! . . ."

"Very well, very well!" She tried to soothe him. "Let us talk of something which isn't religion. What shall we talk about?"

He wiped his eyes and blew his nose noisily.

"Let us talk about marriage and having a child. Why did you refuse Galib Bey?"

"Too dull, Uncle."

"All husbands are dull, my Rose." And he shook his head knowingly.

"Peregrini wouldn't be," she said as if speaking to herself.

"He is a Giaour, out of the question," he scolded her. But in a way he was reassured. The girl wouldn't speak in that frank manner if she had any dangerous feeling for Peregrini. The dwarf himself was very happy, too happy to worry. There was no one in the world with whom the girl talked as she did with him. He was almost her other self, her double. He was privileged beyond his deserts.

Pembeh came home when Rabia was settled in bed.

"Sabiha Hanim kisses your eyes and says that you must pity her old age and go to her. She wept so much over the letter."

"Did the Pasha too read the letter?"

"He was not there. Bilal was with her. He is always in her room now. The wedding is fixed for April. Oh, do go to see Sabiha Hanım! Bilal will usurp your place in her heart."

"Let him. . . ."

"Aren't you jealous?"

"Not at all. . . ."

But she was. Her heart was insatiable for love, especially that night. She felt it to be a creature with many tentacles, and each tentacle was tightly wound round some object she loved. She was necessarily exclusive in such a mood.

41

THE First Chamberlain lived in a large house by the Robert College gates. It had been built on the edge of the water by his ancestors some two centuries ago, and in spite of sundry repairs and adaptations, it still retained the air of sober dignity, the simplicity of line, which characterise old-fashioned domestic architecture. The spacious grounds behind it, with their old elms and pines, extended to the top of the gentle slope behind the house. Amidst the green of the clustering trees a tiny white chalet nestled against the hill.

One Thursday morning, in early December, Rabia came to the First Chamberlain's house by the sea. That evening she was to chant her first public Mevlut.

The mansion reminded her a little of Selim Pasha's Konak. The interior was roomy and well designed, and the furniture was even finer than Sabiha Hanim's. There were fewer carpets and chandeliers, but each was a masterpiece. This was one of the very few old houses which had preserved the carved and gilt seventeenth-century ceilings. The walls displayed old etchings and studies of scenes taken from the historic "Tulip Period." The house had also preserved the old open-fire system. This was something completely new to Rabia. She stared at the yellow marble chimney-pieces and the roaring fires in the large grates as a young slave led her from hall to hall.

Before they reached the sitting-room Rabia heard the sound of a piano. Someone was playing with considerable skill.

"That is Arif Bey," said the young slave. "He is Bey

Effendi's nephew. His sister has just come. Perhaps you wouldn't mind going in. The ladies of the neighbourhood do not veil from him."

"No, I don't mind," said Rabia. She was still wearing her street costume, and in her professional capacity she was used to meeting men.

The lady of this imposing house was Ikbal Hanim, the Chamberlain's nurse. He had never married, and he lived alone in his ancestral home with his old nurse and his orphaned nephew. The old lady was sitting in an arm-chair and sewing as Rabia entered. She rose at once. She had evidently put on her green brocade in Rabia's honour. The dried-up little woman with the wrinkled face was not devoid of charm. Her black eyes gazed at Rabia with deep reverence, for the girl possessed that intangible air of authority and dignity which familiarity with the technique of ritual invariably confers.

A youngish woman had also risen from a chair by the window, and through the wide pane behind her Rabia caught sight of the white-capped waves and the angry green of the Bosphorus in winter. The third person present was the Chamberlain's young nephew Arif.

"I hope you are not too cold," said the old woman, while Arif pulled a chair to the fire for Rabia. She found the log fire very pleasant, and she was completely fascinated by the yellow marble basin in the middle of the room, in which a tiny fountain played softly while small goldfish swam lazily about.

Why did the young man remain in the harem? thought Rabia. Had he no business? As a matter of fact he had none. Music was his chief interest in life, and he was considered to be the most brilliant Turkish pianist after Prince Nejat. But his aristocratic connections barred him from adopting music as a livelihood. Being too indolent by nature to look

for some other suitable profession, he remained in his uncle's house. At times he attended the Robert College for a few months, but he would quickly tire of any assiduous work.

At the moment his curiosity was roused. Both his music master and Vehbi Effendi had spoken of Rabia. But he had not expected a Koran-chanter to be so attractive. A little awed by the composure and the gravity of the girl, he lingered in the room, hoping for an occasion to speak to her.

His sister shared his interest in Rabia. She was much older than the boy, and possessed a house of her own on the other side of the water. She had come to her uncle's to attend the annual Mevlut-chanting. Her own household was of a more modern type; she herself enjoyed the freedom of a Westernised life, but temperamentally she had remained rather old-fashioned. The Koran-chanter delighted her because she seemed to have her roots in the native soil—a symbol of all that was old and permanent in the tradition of the land.

After the mutual salutations, and the polite inquiries after each other's health, and the health of their relatives and their households, Arif's sister said:

"I wish you would go on with that Nocturne of Chopin's, Arif. They play nothing but cabaret songs in my house."

"Our visitor may not like it," said Ikbai Hanım, hoping that she would not.

"I should love it; it is sometime since I heard the piano played," she said eagerly.

As a matter of fact, it was over a year since she had heard Peregrini play in Hilmi's room. The smooth flow of the wistful Nocturne took her back to the old days. She remembered how Peregrini always sneered at Chopin, while Hilmi begged him to play nothing but Chopin. How Peregrini's playing had thrilled and subjugated her in those days! And Arif had a touch of his master's style.

The waves were breaking against the stones outside, the wind roared, and the Nocturne sounded sweet and tame against the wild harmony of the elements.

"He is at it all day long," whispered the old nurse. "It drives me crazy, but the poor boy has no other distraction; one must be indulgent with youth."

Rabia nodded absent-mindedly, her eyes watching the play of muscle on the boy's back.

The servant stood by the door waiting for Arif to finish; then she announced lunch.

In the afternoon Ikbal Hanim took matters into her own authoritative hands. Rabia must rest; no one must disturb her. She led her to the room assigned to her on the top floor, and as she closed the door she called back: "There will be a servant in the corridor all the time. Call her when you want water for your ablutions."

Rabia settled by the window, looking out lazily, without taking off her outdoor clothes. She could hear the rattle of the wind in the eaves above. Though the panorama of dark clouds sweeping overhead, the flood of the raging waters below, and the delicate tracery of the shores and hills made her catch her breath with wonder, yet her thoughts were elsewhere. She was restless; she was thinking of Peregrini. She saw him now not as the middle-aged, obliging friend who was trying to help her, but as the great musician. She could never escape the magic of the man who made such lovely and mighty tunes.

"I wish Peregrini were a Moslem, so that I could marry him," she said to herself almost wearily. There was no other way of freeing herself from the rare but all-powerful charm of the man. After a while she chided herself for surrendering to her personal thoughts, when all her energies must be devoted to the upkeep of Tewfik at Damascus.

She rose, and went out into the corridor to ask for water.

Cold water and her long prayers restored her mind to the thoughts which should have occupied it that day For the rest of the afternoon she sat on a chair, her hands beating time on her knees, while she hummed the opening of the Mevlut in the major key.

42

THE folding doors of three reception rooms were open, making a hall as big as a small mosque. It was packed with women kneeling on the floor. A panorama of feminine faces framed in white muslin, their eyes filled with passionate expectation, turned towards a platform covered with silk rugs. On the platform was a desk on which two candles burned in silver candlesticks. The three chandeliers had the look of quaint bouquets of light, fancifully hung over the heads of the kneeling crowd.

Four hundred necks craned to get a view of the chanter as she followed the hostess, walked through the central room, and knelt on a cushion behind the empty desk. The sharp line of her long legs under the cotton robe, the extreme slimness of the bust in the quilted and old-fashioned jacket, had given the audience a foretaste of a creature consumed with some inner fire. In its white muslin frame the face looked as though some strange passion had wasted the features until the fair skin adhered to the very bones. The face gripped the imagination of the crowd before the lips unclosed and regaled them with the voice. She had opened the book and placed it on the desk but her eyes were staring at the bunches of light above the heads of the audience.

With the first notes the kneeling crowd began to wave like a field of white daffodils when the winds of the open blow freely on its surface. Soft sighs, heavy sighs, single sobs, sobs in chorus joined in her chant, but the chanter—whether conscious or unconscious of the general emotion—continued to describe in melody the feelings and fancies of a woman in travail.

At last there was a great rustling. The audience had risen. They were stroking one another's backs and repeating in low tones: "Blessings unto thee!" They were welcoming a child which had come to abide on earth. That it was a prophet did not seem to matter. Is not every child, when it descends upon earth, a messenger of God? In their collective passion there was something supremely human; each was carried away by the ecstatic sense of fulfilment which comes to every woman after travail. There were sighs, sobs, tears of triumph and of joy. The "Birth" part of the song was over.

During the interval between the "Birth" and the "Death" of the song young girls sprinkled rose-water into outstretched hands and offered sherbets. Incense burned heavily, embalming the air with savoury sweetness. It was then that Rabia's eyes rested on a single row of chairs in the background. They were put there for those who were too modern to kneel. The group that occupied them revived the memory of an old vision in Rabia's mind. She had seen a procession of such women passing through the halls of Selim Pasha's Konak. That trick of raising an eyebrow could belong to no other women. They must be a Palace crowd. Among them, in a seat of honour, was a radiant creature. The stately head might have been carved in marble, so fair it was, and so clearly it stood out. A straight silky fringe of sunny hair showed under the veil. Where had Rabia seen that face?

At the farther end of the hall, on Rabia's right, was a curtain. From behind that curtain a select group of the Sultan's musicians began to sing a classic hymn. Rabia forgot about the woman she was trying to place in her memory. This was a treat which only the First Chamberlain could offer to his guests. The singers' voices had a soothing effect. Rabia thought of Vehbi Effendi. Men managed to put the contemplative and the impersonal into their art so much better than women. How did they do it?

When they stopped Rabia had to chant the "Death." She did her best and saddest in the minor key as she had done her best in the major key at the opening. The difference in the [illegible] quality of the song was striking. The human and [illegible] element had disappeared. The shadow of death had [illegible] their hearts. There was an agony of fear of the inevitable end of human life; each and all were concerned with [illegible] aftermath. Hysteria had taken hold of them [illegible] women fainted and had to be carried out of the hall.

The ceremony had ended. Women distributing sweets in coloured paper bags passed in and out of the audience. Rabia walked out of the hall with two women holding her arms. The crowd respectfully opened a way for the chanter. It was when Rabia entered a room and the door had been closed by [illegible] that she looked at them carefully. One was the Chamberlain's niece, the other was the beautiful figure in the centre of the Palace crowd. Why, she was . . .

"Oh, Canary Hanum!" Rabia cried, winding her arms round Canary's neck.

The Chamberlain's niece coughed.

"I didn't know you knew Princess Nejat," she said.

This was the secret which Peregrini had kept from her.

"There was a time when we sat at the same table," the Princess was saying while she patted Rabia's arm. "I was [illegible] then, and she, well, she was neither big enough nor famous enough to eat at the table of the masters. Curious that we should meet round a table again after so many years!"

Following the Princess's gaze, Rabia saw the round table in the middle of the room—a wonderful spread of dainty dishes, a silver samovar steaming amidst silver candlesticks! She was already forgetting her fatigue. She was going to eat with Canary once more.

"She must be famished; she refused to eat before her chanting," said the Chamberlain's niece.

"No one could accomplish that feat on a full stomach," remarked the Princess.

A grey-haired but young-looking woman opened the door and came in. She was the only woman who did not wear the head-veil, so she must be a Christian. However, she was evidently on intimate terms with the Princess.

"I am so glad you brought me with you, Princess," she said; and then, turning to Rabia, she added: "You made me think of Christmas, my dear."

The Princess introduced her.

"This is Mrs Hopkins, the wife of my husband's professor of English from Robert College. She is also a very dear friend of mine, Rabia."

Mrs Hopkins' capable hands were already in charge. She made them all sit down and began to make tea. "The young chanter has cast her spell on you all. What about eating? I am so hungry!" she said.

Rabia, while she ate, watched Canary with eyes of wonder. A Canary who was no longer Canary. It was curious, the way everyone changed rôles and situations on the stage of life. Yet one came across them again. In and out the same person was worked into the design of life. Who would ever have thought of seeing Canary again! Perhaps Tewfik too might come back.

"You haven't changed much, Rabia. But what makes you look so serious, child?"

"I am not serious . . . and you are still as beautiful, I think even more than ever. . . ."

"Well, I am beautiful, and I am a Princess," Canary interrupted her, with an ironical tone in her voice. "To be beautiful is expected of every Circassian woman."

"Why must a Circassian woman be always beautiful?" Mrs Hopkins asked.

"Because they marry Sultans."

"Why didn't the Sultan marry you himself, Princess?"

"Because elderly men are difficult to catch, Mrs Hopkins."

In Rabia's mind the picture of a fair slave sitting on a floor-cushion and playing an *ut* was taking shape. She could remember how the tears had dropped down her cheeks, and the way she had sung, her voice scarcely audible, and heavy with a grief the significance of which had escaped Rabia in those days.

"The Sultan couldn't marry her because of his devotion to the lady who owned Princess Nejat in those days," the Chamberlain's niece explained.

"I didn't know Sultans had such scruples," Mrs Hopkins laughed.

"Well, the Sultan's attachment to his wife, my Lady Rose-Mouth, was unique."

"She must be an unusual person."

"The next time she comes to see me I will ask you to meet her, Mrs Hopkins. She is a great lady; her pet hobby is to adopt and educate little Circassian girls who have beauty and intelligence. Thanks to her, the foolish young Princes sometimes get sensible and intelligent wives."

"Tell Mrs Hopkins how you first saw the Sultan, Princess," begged the Chamberlain's niece.

"It was in the very first week I had gone to the Palace," the Princess began. "My Lady Rose-Mouth asked me to take her adopted children to the Sultan on their morning visit. This happened every day. Someone would take them to the Sultan's suite of rooms and wait there at the door of the royal chambers until His Majesty came out. He would stop and talk to them for a while; you see, he loved children and animals."

"Strange trait in a bloody tyrant," thought Mrs Hopkins.

"So I marched a small fair-haired band along the corridor outside the royal apartments." The Princess stopped. She was

thinking of the little group tiptoeing, prim and dainty, on the thick carpets, behaving with such grown-up seriousness. "The corridor was a huge rectangular landing. Gilded mirrors lined the walls, and the furniture was upholstered in red damask and gold. A hundred-branched chandelier lighted the place day and night, for there were no windows, only two doors, one of which opened into the Sultan's apartment. Hanging from that door was a massive gold cage in which was a green parrot."

The parrot, seen for the first time on that memorable day, had never been forgotten. Canary could always remember how it had stood, asleep on its perch, its head under one burnished wing. And the children had stared at the cage as if it were the magic crystal through which they could reach the Beyond.

"Before anyone heard the Sultan's steps, that uncanny bird knew. It flapped its wings and cocked its head on one side, its red, red eyes shining like jewels, its beak turning to right and left. Before the door opened a blood-curdling scream came from the cage: 'Long live the Sultan!' You would think its very life depended on cheering the Sultan three times before he passed that door."

To Rabia's delight Canary mimicked the parrot's call. And she asked, "What does the Sultan look like?"

Canary screwed up her blue eyes.

"A smooth beard, half-moon eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, red cheeks . . . of course, all the colouring is artificial."

"You don't mean he makes up?" asked Mrs Hopkins.

"He certainly does. He has a sallow complexion and he has to impress his subjects."

"That sounds effeminate."

"Not at all. His very voice is . . ."

'Oh, tell us what he said to you, Princess!"

'He looked at me angrily. He looked dangerous. I was not

the usual attendant in charge, and he was suspicious of new faces. 'Who are you?' he asked." Princess Nejat reproduced Abdul Hamid's extraordinary bass. "'I am Lady Rose-Mouth's dancing-girl,' I said. 'Thank you,' he said, reassured. 'Take good care of the children.' He bowed his gracious bow and went away, but not before speaking to the parrot for a minute."

Princess Nejat sighed with relief. She had found the Sultan repellent. "I am glad I did not find favour in his eyes," she said, as if speaking to herself.

"Here is some hot tea, Princess," Mrs Hopkins was saying. She was as childishly interested as Rabia in the tale. "Now tell us about the Prince, how he fell in love at first sight . . . so on and so forth."

"There was no romance in my marriage. My beauty had nothing to do with it, nor sentiment either. The Palace was full of lovely women, and they all gave the poor boy no peace. They waylaid him in the corridors, they made eyes at him, they were so jealous that they would have torn each other's eyes out. I was the only person who took no notice of the Prince. So he married me as soon as he could. I am not only his wife. I am also a kind of bodyguard. I protect him from the others; he is too handsome for the peace of mind of the young women in the Palace."

"Could you satisfy my curiosity on one single point, Princess?" This was from Mrs Hopkins.

"I am ready to do so on many points, Emma Hopkins." The Princess sipped her tea, her eyes twinkling. She was in a most confidential mood.

"Why does His Majesty let the Prince live freely while he keeps his other nephews and relatives practically as prisoners in their establishments?"

"Because of the Prince's father."

"I don't see the connection."

"The Prince's father was—how shall I say?—something of a child in nature. Utterly devoid of all ambition. He had such queer hobbies. He used to have a toy boat on the pond in his park. Tiny landing-stations were built all round on the banks, and he would pretend to be a booking clerk. His attendants had to dress in sailor's clothes. He remained a boy of seven to the end of his life. Now Prince Nejat has no such infantile fancies. But the fact that he is his father's son makes him *persona grata* in the Sultan's eyes. Further, the Prince, like his father, has no ambition. You know his only interest is music. That also is another point in his favour. The poor darling is so shy that he stammers if you speak to him. That also you know, Emma Hopkins. Yet he can while away the Sultan's worries by playing to him for hours. The Sultan shares the Prince's love for German music. All that has helped us. We are left to our own devices. He can even take lessons in literature from the poet Kudret Bey, a person not *bien vu* by the Sultan."

There was a lull in the conversation, and the company drank their third cup of tea.

"Now tell me what you have been doing with yourself, Rabia?"

"Koran-chanting and selling cheese, onions, and other smelly things at the 'Istanbul Groceries'."

"I heard of the painful incident. . . ." The Princess stopped, and changed the subject tactfully. "Here you are, turning into a famous Mevlut-chanter as well. You will be making the people of Istanbul cry as often as your father used to make them laugh. Now tell me, how is my old mistress? I haven't been to see her since I have come to live at Bebek."

"I don't go to the Konak any more," Rabia said, looking away. "I couldn't meet Selim Pasha after his part in my father's exile."

"You are wrong, Rabia. He was very fond of you. After all, he did nothing but his duty. There is nothing he wouldn't sacrifice for that word. But he is a great personality, all the same."

The Princess's cheeks were growing flushed. She glanced at the clock on the mantelpiece.

"Oh I am late! I must be going. You are coming to see me to-morrow morning, Rabia, aren't you?"

"Yes, Princess."

"I am glad we shall be eating together often now. Just as in the old days. And you are going to meet the Prince to-morrow."

43

"GOOD morning!" The toothless mouth sank deeper into the wrinkled face. Ikbal Hanim was seated at a small table in the sitting-room, waiting for Rabia.

Rabia greeted the old woman pleasantly, and stood by the basin, watching the little red fish racing after crumbs.

"Here is your coffee, Rabia Hanim. The young people are still asleep." She put Rabia's cup before her, and the girl noticed an envelope addressed to herself by her plate. That was her fee. What had they paid her? She kept her eyes away from it. She would open it in the carriage.

The old nurse was chatty, telling Rabia of her triumph of the night before. Even the First Chamberlain himself was profoundly impressed.

"He was behind the curtain with Vehbi Effendi last night. He told me that he had never heard such a beautiful 'Birth Song.' Believe me, my dear, he was crying with emotion just as much as the women on this side of the curtain."

"What did Vehbi Effendi say?" Rabia's eyes were on the old woman's eyes. She was so anxious for the Master's verdict.

"He said nothing. I believe he has gone to Prince Nejat's this morning. You will be certain to see him at lunch there."

Rabia opened the envelope in the carriage as she drove up to Prince Nejat's castle. There were fifteen pounds . . . she chuckled with delight. It meant that she could easily buy a leather set of shadow figures for Tewfik. It meant further that she was an unusual Mevlut-chanter. The curious excitement which she used to feel when she had first began Koran-chanting was returning.

Prince Nejat's grounds were next to the First Chamberlain's. His castle stood on the top of one of the innumerable hills which are stretched out in long irregular ranges beside the shores of the Bosphorus. The carriage climbed up the wide gravel-drive and deposited her before the castle door. Eunuchs at the door, slave girls inside the door were there to receive her. She went up the stairs in great state secretly amused at the fuss made over her. How incongruous she seemed in her humble woollen street-coat and her cotton head veil among girls in sumptuous silks and satins!

Palace etiquette demanded bare heads in women and covered heads in men. The most orthodox Moslem woman had to appear without a head-veil before the members of the Royal Family. Knowing this, Rabia let the two waiting-girls take her coat and veil, while a third held a silver mirror before her face Rabia's carefully parted hair and the smooth brown coils at her neck needed no adjustment. "There will be only Vehbi Effendi; no woman veils her face from him in any case. He is a saint," thought Rabia, as she followed the girls to the Princess's morning-room.

The Princess, dressed in a gorgeous blue gown, looked imposing enough, but her big blue eyes were those of an old friend. She summoned Rabia's pupils and introduced them. One was a young negress, who bore the name of "White Rose"; the two others were fair Circassians, called respectively "The New Night" and "Sun and Moon." The negress had a beautiful voice, and was to be trained as a singer; the other two were to be taught stringed instruments. So this was the trio which Rabia was to train. When it had been arranged that Rabia should come every Monday and remain until Wednesday, a teacher during the day and a guest in the evening, the Princess sent her to the music room with her pupils. "They will bring you back to my room when you have finished," said the Princess.

In a room at the back of the castle, which looked like a museum of musical instruments, Rabia toiled for two hours, giving her first lesson. When she went back to the Princess's room it was already lunch-time, so she followed her friend to the dining-room. The view which caught her eyes from behind the wide glass doors opening on to a balcony was grandiose enough to take her breath away. The light grey sky seemed in furious, sweeping motion between the high stretches of hills on the two shores, and far beneath lay a long, winding expanse of heaving gun-metal grey. . . . The view disappeared; between the Prince and Vehbi Effendi stood Peregrini.

"Good God," she said to herself, "I haven't my head-veil, and here is Peregrini, neither a prince nor a saint, and a Christian into the bargain!" A strange sense of sin took hold of her; but for her severe early training in self-restraint she would have turned and fled. She moved forward, outwardly composed, bowed to the Prince and to Vehbi Effendi, and shook the hand which Peregrini offered. Her fingers trembled; their tips were icy; and she avoided Peregrini's eyes. He noted her agitation, and could not understand its cause. No matter how familiar he might be with the life of the country, he could hardly comprehend the sense of shame and sin that invaded Rabia's mind merely because she was appearing before him without a veil. He was puzzled to interpret her inner disturbance. Her face had a drawn expression; her pale skin was flushed, and the green specks in her golden irises were ablaze. But she seemed to have no eyes for any but for the Prince.

"The devil, but she is beautiful!" thought Peregrini. "But she looks only at the Prince. He is positively loathsome to me to-day. No man has a right to be so beautiful; it is sheer degeneracy."

Whatever the cause, the Ottoman Dynasty had produced

more than once that sort of beauty which no man has a right to possess. The arches of the eyebrows were too perfect, the large, dark blue eyes, fringed with very black, curling lashes, the small lips, with the narrow, fair, silky moustache, were positively decorative. He stood there with his fez on one side, one eyebrow lifted, bowing to Rabia with exquisite grace.

Though Prince Nejat worked havoc among the Palace girls, secluded and cursed with morbid and excitable imaginations, a girl like Rabia was not touched by his beauty. A Prince had to look different from other people. He was no more to her than a historical monument or some curious painting. But what made her really like him was his agony of self-consciousness and his painful effort not to stammer as he spoke. However, this girl in the absurd cotton print gown and quilted jacket, among his womenfolk, who all wore costly silks, very soon put him at his ease. He had never been so interested in any person outside the Palace, but the spell which she cast upon him had nothing to do with her sex or her unusual looks.

Peregrini, sitting opposite him, watched them, trying to catch Rabia's eyes, and failing. Vehbi Effendi was sitting between Rabia and the Princess. He was talking to the Princess all the time.

The Prince was saying to himself: "She is the granddaughter of an Imam and the daughter of a popular comedian . . . she lives in one of those little houses. How I have longed to see the inside of those queer little homes!" Aloud he said: "The Princess tells me that you live in 'Sinekli-Bakkal', fancy a name like that!" He laughed, apparently delighted, and Peregrini once more told himself that the man was an idiot.

"The street deserves its name. Thousands and thousands of flies pester the place in the summer. Have you ever passed through our street, Your Highness?"

"No, but I am going to call all the little streets I have passed, 'The Fly-Plagued Grocer' henceforth. I used to be so curious about the people who live inside those houses. What wouldn't I give to see their interiors!"

"It is not so desirable as all that, Your Highness. It is very dirty and very noisy. The women chatter and quarrel at the fountain, and the street children are always playing about in the mud."

"Marvellous, marvellous!" the Prince was saying. No born explorer could sigh with greater longing and curiosity for an undiscovered land. His interest amused Rabia. It made her describe, in vivid and colourful terms, the houses of the Sinekli Bakkal and their inmates. He laughed continually in the nervous and unnatural way that was characteristic of the Palace people.

"It isn't as funny as it sounds for everyone who lives in my street, Your Highness. There are the poor. There is, for example, the cobbler Fehmi Effendi. He toils all day long, yet his wife and three children live in a single room. I doubt whether they can afford more than bread and onions for their meals at times."

"Oh, how distressing!" he said, his eyes filling at once. But somehow it was enjoyable to be distressed about people who had the originality to eat only bread and that evil-smelling vegetable for supper. His Palace folk provided him with no distresses of that sort. All their troubles were based on sex, on jealousy, on intrigue . . . oh, the monotony of it all!

Rabia, unable to guess how enjoyable a sensation pity and distress procured for the Prince, changed the subject. She was telling him now about Mr Big-Brother, his young acolytes, and their picturesque wildness.

"Marvellous, marvellous!" he repeated again. Leaning towards Rabia he became confidential in turn. "My cousin

Prince Rayik has a mania for fire squadrons. He has a small pump, and his gentlemen-in-waiting dress up like the members of a fire squadron to amuse him. He himself acts the part of the chief. The Palace ladies occasionally give false fire-alarms, and he trots up and down his park, with his attendants running after him, all yelling and pretending to put out a fire."

How pathetic it all sounded! Rabia thought of the Prince's father pretending to be a ticket-seller and running a toy steamer in his pond. Why, life behind the Palace walls was just a washed-out, eerie reflection of real life! How pitiful they all were, these young Princes, with their poor pretences, their playing at life!

"Do tell me more about Mr Big-Brother! How does he talk?"

"I couldn't exactly reproduce his vocabulary to Your Highness. But he is a dear, and such a good friend. He is one of our most faithful customers too."

"Marvellous, marvellous!" the Prince repeated. He had pulled his chair a little nearer to Rabia, and was leaning towards her once more. "Near our summer palace at Chamlija there was a grocer's shop. A boy with a blue apron always stood at its door. Whenever our carriage turned the corner he ran after it. I . . . I wanted so much to play with that boy!" He had dropped his voice. Peregrini could no longer follow what he was saying. It was evidently only for Rabia's ears. "I never played as a child," he confided to Rabia, with a strong sense of injustice; he was almost hoarse with emotion. "I had a pack of boring gentlemen-in-waiting around me, tightly buttoned in their tiresome black coats, always moving about like mannikins, always trying to fill my head with useless knowledge. Of what use is any knowledge to a poor Prince condemned to live within Palace walls?"

"I too didn't play for years and years," said Rabia, by way of comforting him. "Not until my father came back from his first exile."

"May they serve the chicken, Your Highness?" asked the Princess. The fish course had not yet been cleared away; the girls were waiting with silver dishes behind the chairs.

"Certainly, certainly," he stammered, confused at having made his guests wait.

"She is muddling up the knives and forks and spoons, and with such sublime unconsciousness," thought Peregrini. "I wish the Princess would feel jealous! How long is that idiotic, degenerate youth going to keep us at table?"

"Quite a number of women fainted at the Mevlut ceremony," the Princess was saying to Vehbi Effendi. "Didn't you think she gave a really great performance?"

Rabia stopped talking. Her eyes were searching Vehbi Effendi's in an agony of expectation. The Dervish smiled at her, a little amused.

"She did pretty well, but somehow it was not in the traditional line."

"I thought her chanting last night had an air of Signor Peregrini's improvisations," the Princess remarked.

"I wish I had been there!" Peregrini was speaking at last, with a note of triumph in his voice.

"You couldn't have been there," Rabia almost snapped at him. "You are not a Moslem."

Who would have ever thought that the fact that he belonged to some other faith had ever meant anything to the girl? So she was slamming a door in his face; she was shutting him out! Oh, the ungrateful girl!

"But Mrs Hopkins was there, and she is not a Moslem."

"But she is religious. Signor Peregrini doesn't believe in anything, he might have laughed."

"You are being unjust!" Vehbi Effendi chided her almost

sternly. "Did you ever know anyone so respectful of tradition and religion as Signor Peregrini? Don't you remember how he used come to the mosques to hear you chant?"

She said nothing. She was conscious of the mysterious battle raging between her and Peregrini. His very existence seemed to trouble her mind. The girls had served the fruit. Rabia had taken a peach but she was still looking at it while the others had began to eat their dessert.

"You are not eating, Rabia Hanim?" Peregrini once more tried to catch her eye.

"I've never used a fork and knife for fruit. . . . I don't knew how!"

The Prince dropped his knife and began to bite his apple. From the white fingers of the Princess the yellow orange juice trickled.

When the waiting girls came in with a silver bowl and ewer and towel for each guest, they all rose.

"When is she coming again, Princess?" Prince Nejat asked.

"Every Monday. She will stay with us in the evening. I am going to ask Vehbi Effendi and Signor Peregrini to dine on Monday evenings with us. But I am afraid Your Highness must hurry. His Majesty will be expecting you to play this afternoon."

With him the men left the harem. Before Rabia took her leave, the Princess put her hands on the girl's shoulders and looked into her eyes.

"Will you do something for me, Rabia?"

"Anything you want me to. . . ."

"I want you to go to Selim Pasha's Konak You must be indulgent; you mustn't brood over past wrongs. And if . . . if ever you mention my name to Selim Pasha, tell him that I think of him and am sorry for him."

"I will," promised Rabia. Something very disturbing had

happened to her that day. Her resentment towards Selim Pasha had sunk to a secondary plane. Everything in her life had to be shelved for a time. Her youth, her right to live for herself, was up in arms, and was occupying the foremost position in her heart.

44

RABIA was describing the Princess and her Palace. She sat cross legged on a cushion by the brazier, roasting her thin fingers. Her long braids, which she had let down, swung on her shoulders as she shook her head to right and left.

"Yaaaaaaa, yaaaaaaa," said the dwarf, his eyes wide open, his face wrinkled all over with the broadest and deepest grin of delight. He must know every blessed detail about the Palace. He was as curious concerning the mysteries of life inside the Palace walls as the Prince had been regarding the inner secrets of the houses in the Sinekli-Bakkal. Rakim licked his lips as Rabia talked, evoking picture after picture. Life was one long labour for everyone outside the Palace walls. So thought Rakim, and Rabia humoured him as she had humoured the Prince. Both were so pathetic.

"Booooooo," blew the north wind in the garden, and the gravel rained on the kitchen door, striking it like hail. Pembeh smoked in silence, her eyes screwed up into mere slits, noting the hectic spots on Rabia's cheeks and the sparkle in her eyes. Something must have happened to the girl during her first visit to the Palace.

The girl herself went on glibly with her tale, while her mind battled valiantly with a vision of a middle-aged man with a tortured face. The Evil One was behind that face; she must fight it as the old heroes had fought the dragons; she must obliterate that vision, or it would damn her immortal soul. How she had hurt him when she had told him that he couldn't attend a Mevlut-chanting! That served him right. Rabia must barricade herself behind religion, tradi-

tion, everything and anything which her old country could supply. Never allow him to step over the barrier . . . Yet her ears listened intently for a knock on the shop door. Peregrini might call.

"Aren't you going to bed to-night, Rabia?"

Peregrini paced up and down in his room. Scene after scene in Prince Nejat's palace flitted across his mind. "It is love at first sight," he repeated to himself, over and over again, as he visualised the Prince pulling his chair nearer and nearer to the girl, and leaning over and whispering into her ear. Why wasn't the Princess jealous? Oriental women, he thought, were like tigers with their men. Perhaps the Princess understood the situation better than he could. After all, there might be nothing in it. Poor girl! She had been always surrounded by middle-aged music masters, decrepit dwarfs, old Pashas. Shame on you, Peregrini! he chided himself; the girl is young enough to be your daughter. It needed only that disgustingly pretty Prince to transform his old love for the girl into a thing of lasting torture.

Sabiha Hanim said to Selim Pasha:

"Rabia called to-day. Didn't I tell you I would make her come to me? Pembeh is going to have her coral ear-rings. She has earned them."

"She came during the day; she wants to avoid me," thought Selim Pasha, then he turned to Bilal, who at that moment entered the room.

"Good evening; what is the news, my son?"

"Nothing, sir. I've come to see if mother needs anything."

She kissed him on both cheeks, and led by some tender association she put her fingers into his collar, "You look hot, Bilal; I must tell someone to give you a cup of lime-flower tea."

The Pasha looked away.

"Why didn't you ask Rabia to stay to dinner?"

"I did, but she is going to give the slaves of Princess Nejat music lessons and will be spending Monday evenings there. Fancy our old slave Canary being such a great lady!"

"Why not? She was so beautiful!"

"Yes, yes; in a cold way, though. However, she has been very gracious, and has sent us her salaams by Rabia. Rabia suggests our asking her to Bilal's wedding. Why do you blush, you foolish Bilal?"

On Monday evening, after dinner, Prince Nejat once more tried to monopolise Rabia. Peregrini's inner disturbance was marked enough to be noticed at least by Vehbi Effendi. The Dervish said to himself: "It would be good if Peregrini were to go to his country, or travel in some foreign land for a time. His presence here creates trouble; he is like a snake in Rabia's fair and peaceful garden. But he is suffering, poor wretch." But why didn't he love the girl as Vehbi Effendi loved her? Why should people like Peregrini remain in such a crude stage of life, satisfied with nothing less than a sense of absolute ownership? The world and its goods as well as the beauty and love therein belonged to every human being to enjoy. Why this selfish exclusiveness? There could be no peace in any sphere of life until men would learn to share all good things with their fellow creatures. . . .

The Princess pulled her chair near to Rabia; Vehbi Effendi followed.

The Princess invited the Italian to join their circle, "Won't you too come, *cher maître*?"

"If your Highness doesn't mind I will go and play to myself in the next room," he said, rising and leaving them to themselves.

Apart from a slight heightening of colour on Rabia's

cheeks, no one could tell that she minded Peregrini's refusal to join her little circle. But inwardly she raged; she was slighted; he was leaving her, preferring his barbarous music to her talk! Let him! Here was the very cream of her country's society, eating out of her hands, drinking every word that fell from her lips!

In the next room Peregrini's fingers struck the chords fiercely, almost insanely. But what wonderful sounds he unchained! . . . sounds like a shrill wind whistling in a blind alley, then the roar of waters, a wild conceit of the elements in space. Rabia's pride fell to the ground. The orchestral effect of the Master's improvisation had taken the Prince's mind away from Rabia. They all listened. Through that hurricane of harmonies a single sweet melody was singing. By Allah, he could raise a thousand jinn, a thousand devils with his fingers, yet make such a familiar air override them all!

He stopped. When he began again the four people in the little circle looked at one another. It was the gravest and lowest minor melody that they had ever heard on the piano. Yet it was somehow familiar. Why, that was how Rabia always began the opening line of all her chants: "In the name of the Merciful of the Merciful." She swayed unconsciously, and her lips moved. Peregrini appeared at the door. The four rose and clapped.

"Marvellous, marvellous . . ." said the Prince.

"Oh, Rabia, you should chant your opening of the Mevlut to Signor Peregrini!"

"No, no, nothing religious. Let me have a tambourine. I will sing you a popular air."

When she had the tambourine she sat on the carpet. Her fingers moved on the taut leather, the castanets tinkled, and she sang the old, old song of "The Kerchief." She sang in gypsy fashion, almost as Pembeh would have done. There was a strange joyousness about her as she waved her head

to the lilt of the song. Her eyes laughed, and into her lower notes a little huskiness had crept. Never had her voice sounded passionate in an earthly sense.

"From garden to garden wave thy kerchief . . . the crimson kerchief, the purple kerchief. . . ."

Peregrini took out his white handkerchief and waved it.

"Is Rabia going to fall in love with the Italian?" the Princess asked herself. The Prince had closed his eyes, a boyish smile hovering over his decorative mouth. "The girls in Sinekli-Bakkal must sing like that," he was telling himself.

"Where will this lead us?" Peregrini was asking himself. "She has hoisted the flag of peace . . . we can wave kerchiefs from garden to garden, although hers is crimson and purple. Oh the minx, the charmer, the witch!"

"Allah forgive me!" cried Rabia's sinful heart. Its many tentacles, each wound round a separate object, had all stretched out towards one man. They wanted to close over him, to hold him and him only.

The next Monday Peregrini was not there. Rabia dared not ask the reason. The evening appeared endless, and the Prince bored her. "Have you a headache, Rabia?" the Princess asked.

"No." She tried to put some animation in her voice, and failed: it had a colourless tone. "I have used my voice too much this week."

The Prince rose.

"Rest for a while, Rabia Hanım. I will play for you."

Vehbi Effendi walked to her side.

"Peregrini's mother has died, Rabia."

So that was the cause of his absence. What a relief!

"He is going to his own country to settle his affairs. I suppose he will be away for about a month."

"He may never come back."

The bitterness of the girl's voice startled the Dervish. He went to the *window and remained there.* The Prince had already begun to play. She sat back and closed her eyes. His playing had none of the tortured and torturing passion of Peregrini. But it was great playing, all the same, despite its contemplative remoteness and lack of emotion. It was very restful. It made no demands on one's heart. However, it didn't much appeal to the Princess. She had joined Vehbi Effendi by the window, and Rabia could hear them talking very softly.

"No one in the country plays German music as well as the Prince," she was saying. "Yet I don't understand it. His Majesty loves it."

"I don't understand it either. It sounds like a mighty monument of sound created by a super-sound engineer. Only a mathematical genius could conceive it."

"What sort of interiors would such monuments have?" the Princess asked.

"I should imagine them to be very logical. Every piece built for some useful purpose. Not like ours, which have such useless but such cosy and intimate nooks and corners."

"Have I bored you?"

The Prince was standing at the door. Rabia rose.

"It was very beautiful, Your Highness," she said, really grateful for the respite it had given her.

"I was telling the Princess how alien and how incomprehensible the German music is to me," said Vehbi Effendi. "Yet I love Italian music, and I find some of Peregrini's improvisations wonderful."

"What puzzles me," said the Prince, "is the appalling difference between the internal rhythm of the Western and the Eastern music."

"The West has no melody to speak of. . . ."

"Hasn't it, though? However, its harmony is great. The single melodies of our music make me feel so lonely. In the East we seem to be separated, so utterly shut up within ourselves."

And Rabia felt too like that.

45

THE wheels of Fate were turning, as ruthlessly and as blindly as ever. They had made a Moslem girl love a Christian. They had crushed Rabia. Yet God in His mercy had made the Christian's mother die, so that he might disappear. Perhaps he would never return. The prospect was painful. But it gave her a chance to overcome her guilty passion in his absence. She was under trial. Fate was testing the strength of her attachment to her faith.

It was natural for her to attribute the incalculable movements of life to the Unseen. The world she lived in was that of the soul. All external signs of human achievement and omnipotence were as shadows compared to the workings of the unseen forces. That was the conviction of her Eastern soul. The earliest stratum of human reason was linked up with the Imam's grim and inhuman metaphysics. An avenging God, a pitiless Fate, ruled human destiny. Jealous of all human happiness, they snatched the cup of joy from one's mouth before one could taste it. Yet in Rabia's mind, stratum after stratum of rational thought, which put a less gloomy complexion on the designs of the Unseen, had been formed since her childhood. In these regions of thought Vehbi Effendi ruled supreme. He had interpreted human destiny in a gentler and kinder way. However, no matter from what angle she faced the situation, it resolved itself into a single aspect. The death of Peregrini's mother, which had called him away at the very moment when she had realised her love for him, was a warning. She must tear that sinful feeling out of her heart.

For a week a mighty battle raged in her mind. Fortunately

for her, every hour was full. Engagement followed engagement. She was constantly trotting from one corner of the city to another. She came home worn out, her throat aching. Her silence in the evenings seemed only natural. Yet both Pembeh and Rakim noticed a new, deep, vertical line between her eyebrows. Her face was rigid, full of the determination to solve some difficult problem.

Her nights had become intolerable. She took to reading for hours before she went to bed. Pembeh grumbled, and her body ached with fatigue. But sleep meant torturing dreams. Was there anyone in the world who had such endless dreams as Rabia? And now they were not comfortable dreams; they were mostly nightmarish. All the formative forces of her life were up in arms. They appeared before her in the guise of terrible and distorted human faces. Emineh's was the most unbearable. She always dreamed of her mother's mouth, that straight scar across her face. It had been Emineh's most characteristic feature. It was contorted with an ugly sneer, and an incredibly long tongue—the tongue of a reptile—protruded from the ugly mouth and mocked Rabia. The Imam was always present. He did nothing but chant awesome verses out of the Koran, just as he used to in the old days, terrifying Rabia with the horrors of Hell if she did not purge her heart of this unholy passion. Sometimes she dreamed of Vehbi Effendi. She appealed to him, begging him to make Peregrini a Moslem, that she might have her heart's desire. But he seemed sorrowful. She couldn't make out whether he were on Emineh's side or on hers. The worst of it was that after two long weeks her heart was as rebellious, as painfully torn, as in the beginning. Nothing would make it resign itself to losing Peregrini. She chuckled to herself, saying: "No wonder the poets sing that hearts in love are like minced and roasted liver sold in the bazaars!"

By the time she had touched the rock-bottom of misery she had also reached a decision. It was totally different from that to which all the forces of her bad dreams had been leading her. She didn't even know that she had found a solution of the dilemma. But in her heart she had come to the conclusion that life was infinitely more precious and important than any metaphysical consideration. She would wrest her happiness from the jaws of Fate. She would have Peregrini as her husband.

On a Thursday, before the end of that memorable month, Peregrini came to the shop. It was rather early in the morning.

Rakim's face lighted up. His presence, thought the dwarf, may pull Rabia out of her gloomy mood.

"When did you come back, Signor?"

"Last night."

"May Allah make you live long! I have heard of your loss," said the dwarf, repeating the traditional sentence of Moslem condolence.

Peregrini's response, or rather lack of response, puzzled him. The man hardly listened, neither did he speak of his journey or his mother's death. On such occasions the Italian might be expected to become expansive or to philosophise. He did neither. His face seemed almost haggard, but in his eyes burnt the fire of deliverance, and the unmistakable look of one who has reached a momentous decision.

"Could I see Rabia Hanim at once?"

"Of course. You go upstairs and knock at the kitchen door. Auntie is busy washing; no need to announce you. It will do her good. She was in one of her unbearable tantrums. . . ."

Rakim heard the Italian go hurriedly up the stairs. He himself was soon busy serving a customer.

"Re, sol, la, si, la, sol," Rabia sang in the room. She was writing a simple air for her Palace pupils sitting by the

brazier, a sheet of music-paper on one lifted knee. She wetted her pencil and drew her shawl round her shoulders.

"Re, sol, la, si, la, sol . . . oh come in, Uncle. . . ." She turned to scold Rakim for disturbing her, but she started to her feet, pulling the shawl over her head. Peregrini, standing at the door with a grave face, smiled at her childish gesture.

"But I've seen your hair so many times, you absurd little lady!"

"That was because I couldn't keep my veil on before the Prince."

"Damn the Prince," he thought; but aloud he said, "I must talk to you, Rabia, on very serious business."

"Must you? Pray take a seat on the divan, there by the window."

It was when she herself had taken a seat at a considerable distance from him on the divan that she remembered his bereavement.

"May Allah make you live long!" She repeated the phrases as lugubriously as was proper, though her blood was racing with joy through her veins. This was the moment of the final solution of her life's problem.

"I am all alone in the world." He stopped for a long moment; perhaps he was paying his last filial homage to the memory of the dead.

'May Allah give you patience!" She again gave the conventional answer with the proper measure of gravity, but the golden eyes watched his face with a furtive glitter behind the long brown fringe of silky lashes.

"I've come to ask you to be my wife. I—I can't live without you."

She looked at him with eyes that had no trace of shame. Their honesty and sincerity confounded him. "I also cannot live without you, Signor. But how can we marry? We

belong to two different Faiths."

"We could go away to a place where such things don't matter. You can stick to your Faith. I have none."

She looked away from him. The colour was fading from her cheeks. She had the air of one who had thought out things carefully and had come to definite conclusions. Fate had struck her its last blow. She had been unconsciously expecting a different proposition. She knew that she could no more break the chains of custom than she could fly. Further, she could never leave her environment. She realised that it had even a stronger hold upon her than her faith. It was a complete knock-out.

Meanwhile he was not altogether unaware of her possible reaction to such an offer as his. Probably a part of her bewitching personality was due to her being a well-rooted soul, one which could not be transplanted in alien soil. He himself was a wanderer. He must leap over the barriers and accept such a life as she lived if he wished to have her for his wife. No other way of having her was possible. How different from all his other infatuations, in which no element but that of desire had reigned supreme! He was as full of consideration for her as he had been for his mother. He realised the great earnestness of purpose, the capacity for lasting attachment in the girl. Well, against her simple background values seemed more real than in his own changeable world. Although they were so totally different, yet there seemed an intangible resemblance between his mother and this girl. His eyes were on her face. But her lashes were veiling her eyes. Very slowly he saw two drops glistening on her lashes. They fell on her cheeks, and she lifted her eyes to his. The agony, the despair in their depths burnt him. "Baptism by fire!" he murmured; then, in a determined voice, he addressed Rabia.

"I see that I must become a Moslem and marry you. Will

you be my wife then, Rabia?"

Her face had assumed a drawn look; it seemed as though an invisible hand were pulling her features towards her temples. In her this was a sign of supreme inner concentration.

"I will be your wife, always," she said with great simplicity.

He was on his knees beside her, his hands clutching hers.

"Twice we are brought into the world," he said. "Once by our mother, and once by the woman we love."

He rose immediately, and kissed her hand, carrying it to his forehead in expression of his veneration for her. And she felt that it was not at random that the people of her land called the man a girl married "her Fate." The words were the truest expression of her feelings for this man. He was "her Fate."

"I will go and see Vehbi Effendi now, about the formalities of conversion. How soon will you marry me, Rabia?"

"The sooner the better."

That evening, after the usual ritual of rising and kneeling and bowing her forehead to the floor, Rabia lifted her hands and talked with her God.

"Lord," she said: "He has said to me, 'I will take you,' and I have said to him, 'I take you,' and that in our faith constitutes marriage. He is going to accept the true Faith, and be one of us. Bless us, oh Lord!"

46

ON Friday mornings the shop was fuller than on weekdays, for Rakim closed it at noon. That he did not attend the Friday prayers was a known and generally accepted fact. But he could not lack in respect for such a communal affair as the Friday prayers; so he had to pull down the shutters during the time of the service. He served the customers and cracked more jokes with them than ever. This Friday he was in a jolly mood. Rabia had been a little talkative the night before. She had even helped him to cut the coloured paper festoons hung across the ceiling of the shop. Rakim changed them every month. There were geese, ducks, and other creatures, and quaint boats, alternating with rows of green cypresses. At intervals some shadow-play puppets in coloured cardboard dangled from the line.

What a humorous twist Rabia's clever fingers had given to the noses of those cardboard rogues! He chuckled. He had made such a success of that shop! And Rabia had become so much popular than she had ever been! Oh, they were earning a lot of money. The Sinekli-Bakkal was Rakim's world, and Rakim's grocery was the hub of it.

"Uncle Rakim, an oke of soap."

It was Muharrem, the young terror of the street, whom every one called "the Sinekli-Bakkal Bastard." Rakim didn't like the boy. The fellow mimicked him in public: further, his mother, a washerwoman, and a foul-mouthed virago, frightened him not a little.

"What a lot of soap you buy, Muharrem!"

"For mother's washing. The time is coming when she won't be washing the dirt of the rich," the boy said significantly.

"Have you by any chance inherited a fortune from your unknown father?"

"If ever I catch that swine of a father, I will defile his carcass!"

"Shuuuuuut, you filthy-mouth! Tell me, on what are you going to feed yourself when your mother washes no more for the rich?"

"I am apprenticed to Fehmi Effendi, the cobbler."

"That is why you have a clean face. Let us celebrate it with a sugar cock. What colour shall it be?"

"A green one, Uncle," said the boy, licking his lips.

Though Rakim presented his well-behaved juvenile customers with sugar cocks on sticks this was the first time Muharrem had been given one. The boy lingered, feeling that he was in favour, and becoming confidential.

"I wish you would tell Rabia Abla about my job. I will mend her shoes for nothing when I have a shop of my own. You see, I once filched a piece of sugar years and years ago, and there was a row in front of the shop. I am afraid she thinks of me as . . ."

Muharrem had no time to finish the sentence, for Vehbi Effendi's tall figure stooped and entered the shop.

"I want to see Rabia Hanim."

"Please go up to her room, sir. I will call her. She is at Granny Zehra's across the street."

As Rabia hurried across the street and the dwarf struggled to catch up with her, she leaned over him twice and asked the same question, "Does he look annoyed?" But she hardly listened to the answer he gave her: "How should I know? he never shows his feelings on his face." Surely there was something unusual on foot! Here was Vehbi Effendi coming on a Friday, when he had to direct such a solemn ceremony a few hours later! Rakim was eaten up with anxiety. He was very curious, too. He must go up and listen at the door.

Oh, when would the customers stop coming!

Rabia found Vehbi Effendi sitting on the divan with his usual detached air. She thought his face rather pale, but his eyes had their habitual serenity and friendliness.

"Good morning, Effendim."

"Good morning, my child."

She squatted by the brazier, stirring the fire with the tongs. Framed in the coloured kerchief wound about her head, her face retained its composure. But he sensed her inner agitation from the almost imperceptible tremor of her fingers, and the way in which she kept her eyes fixed on the fire, as though she were almost afraid to meet his gaze.

"Shall I make you a cup of coffee, Effendim?"

"I don't take coffee to-day."

So he was fasting. The moment of silence which followed seemed interminable. "I will marry Peregrini even if Vehbi Effendi does not approve," she was saying to herself, but in some vague manner she knew that she would be miserable without his full consent. Without realising the strength of his hold on her mind, she felt that she would be inconsolable if he withdrew that unobtrusive but all-pervading protectiveness.

"Peregrini came to see me last night. He wants to become a Moslem and marry you."

Her eyes flew to his, their depths filled with a dumb prayer. He smiled.

"Are you sure your attachment is not a passing fancy, Rabia?"

She shook her head. The mixture of fervent conviction and humour in her gesture amused Vehbi Effendi.

"I have always wanted to marry that infidel since I was that high. I would have remained single if he had not asked me to be his wife."

How mysterious are the designs of the supreme Artist! thought Vehbi Effendi. How queer and incongruous the human material He mixes in His pictures! A little Koran-chanter in the back street of a *Moslem* city, and an ex-monk and musician, a Christian aristocrat! "No one may dare to question Thy Wisdom, O Lord!" he said to himself. But he had meant to speak of the incompatibility of their characters, rooted in the difference of their worlds, their cultures and the rest. Such things might have a greater hold on Peregrin's mind than Rabia could imagine. She might discover it when it was too late. The Past might stand between them, might wreck their life. . . .

"You two belong to such different worlds, my child. He belongs to a different class and circle; Smekli-Bakkal may lose its romance for him."

She smiled her crooked smile again. With a fatalistic gesture she shrugged her shoulders, and her forefinger passed over her forehead.

"I shall have to read whatever is written there."

"May it be a happy writing, Rabia."

"In the absence of your father," the Dervish continued. "I will make all the arrangements. You understand that you cannot see your future husband before you are made man and wife. It will take a week to go through the formalities of conversion in an official sense. He desires to be called Osman. Do you approve?"

She shook her head. There was profound relief in her face. Vehbi Effendi was going to remain the friend and the spiritual guide he had always been.

"How soon do you wish to be married, Rabia?"

"The sooner the better, Effendim."

Oh, the shameless hussy! She was calling herself every hard name now. But nothing mattered. She heard him, as in a dream, say: "I will write to Tewfik to-night. A brother

Dervish is going to Damascus. You too can write a long letter to your father."

"Uncle, Uncle," she called out as she unfastened the kerchief round her head.

"What is it you want, Rabia?"

"Were you at the door? You frightened me! Come in and sit by me. I have a tale to tell."

"Let it be a short one and a gay one."

"Surely. . . I have taken your advice, I am going to marry."

"What, what? Whom are you going to marry?"

"A man called Osman," she laughed.

"Is he one of the gentleman attendants of the Prince? You have been mighty queer since you started going to the Palace."

"This man is going to become a Moslem, to give up his own religion in order to marry me."

Her face was radiant. The fact that Peregrini had really no convictions of a religious nature to change didn't matter at all.

"So it is Peregrini after all! The fellow takes a religion as a child takes a ticket to enter a show," he growled.

"You are being nasty, spiteful!"

He grinned. He was not. He liked Peregrini well enough. The man understood him most wonderfully.

"I am glad, Rabia. Between ourselves, you were getting too old for anyone to ask you in marriage. What's more, I was afraid you would marry Vehbi Effendi. You were so upset when he called. He is not so cheery as the other one."

"For shame! Vehbi Effendi is a saint. I am not fit to wipe the very dirt under his shoes. You absurd Uncle! If I married everyone I loved I should marry you too."

"So you would, you faceless girl!" He spat at his collar,

invoking the unseen powers to guard him from such a fate. "That poor innocent infidel knows not what is coming to him. I believe you would be marrying us all if custom allowed so many husbands. Why you are like a whirlpool, you are like a haunted well; anyone who falls in can never be fished out!"

"Talking like a story-book, are you?" The tears began to well out of her happy eyes, and she wiped them on her sleeve as she sobbed: "Oh, why isn't Tewfik here with us?"

"There, there, wipe your eyes on my hanky, you messy girl. He will celebrate the wedding in Damascus."

When Pembeh came in for lunch she found the dwarf in a boisterous and impish mood. He was turning somersaults sideways in Rabia's room: monkeyish somersaults, by way of rejoicing over Rabia's engagement, and Rabia sat on the divan laughing and beating time on her knees.

47

SABIHA HANIM gave the news to Selim Pasha. He shook his head.

"She is worth a change of faith. I hope he will stick to his new religion."

"He may stick to Rabia at all events," she laughed.

"Has she consulted you by any chance?"

She laughed again. This was by far the most exciting event of the year.

"Years ago she asked me what would happen if a Moslem girl married a Christian. She had got so far, the minx. Evidently she understood that the only way to marry a Christian was to make him turn Moslem."

"Curious. She didn't seem to care for such a comely lad as Bilal, and now marries that little man. Women are hard to understand. . . "

Just then Rabia came in, followed by Bilal. They had evidently met outside and walked on together. She was very gracious to him. She was in such a turmoil of emotion that she could have embraced the very Devil in those days. The Pasha now saw her for the first time since the painful episode in his office during Tewfik's imprisonment. She came up to him smiling, behaving as though there had never been any such episode. No half-measures for this wonderful creature!

"My congratulations, Rabia. I hear that you are bringing a new soul into the Moslem congregation of Sinekli-Bakkal!" he said in his old quizzical tone.

"Who could think that the cruel, horrible man who ordered us out of his office as though we were dogs could be this same old darling? I suppose he leaves his heart outside

the door of his office," Rabia thought. But there was not the slightest trace of resentment in her heart.

"Peregrini has turned Moslem for the sake of Rabia," Sabiha Hanim was explaining to Bilal, who looked perplexed, as he had not yet heard the news. "Perhaps they will marry even before you do, my son!"

"Oh, that man!" came the scornful, almost involuntary comment from Bilal.

"What do you mean by 'oh, that man'?" Rabia snapped. "He is the greatest musician alive!"

"Quite so," Bilal hastened to assure her. "My congratulations. I suppose I better leave you; you may want to talk things over."

"You needn't. I have only come to read my father's letter to Hanim Effendi. I have to hurry back as fast as I can after that."

Bilal brought a chair for her, and she at once took the letter from her bosom and began to read it. She was obviously choosing the passages which would interest Sabiha Hanim, for she stopped now and then, scanning the sheets in her hand, and putting some of them back into her bosom without reading them.

Tewfik had given her a vivid description of Hilmi's life. It sounded as though Hilmi had experienced a complete revision of values since he had left Istanbul. Who could think of him as a man toiling to make both ends meet, actually working in the garden to grow vegetables for that purpose, and above all, who could imagine his pretty and elegant wife slaving in the house? "He has grown a beard, and wears the native costume. The governor allows him to move about and receive friends. The exiles here have the greatest respect for him. He is a great comfort and an example of courage to us all. There is nothing in the world I wouldn't do for him."

Rabia folded the sheets. Selim Pasha's cool, clear grey eyes were slightly dimmed. There was a vagueness and a warmth in their expression which seemed alien to the man. Sabiha Hanim gazed at the letter in Rabia's hands rather hungrily.

"Do read us some more, something about Tewfik himself," she begged.

Rabia began to read again. Tewfik was telling stories in the bazaars to earn a living until he received the leather set of shadow-play figures from Istanbul. Then he would hire a shop and start giving his proper show. As it was he had become quite a popular figure. His Arabic was not fluent enough, but he could always pretend to talk a language with its proper intonation, accent, and inner rhythm. That always kept his listeners guessing for a time. But his mimicry of animals, and his dialogues in which he made them talk like human beings were a great success. So far his specialty had been the street dogs in Istanbul. Now he had taken up the camels. He had invented a scene in which a group of caravan camels discussed the numbers of strange pilgrims whom they carried to Mecca on pilgrimage. "I am happy enough living with Hilmi Bey. The evenings give me the illusion of being still in my native city. But during the day there are moments when I cry like a child. I am generally surrounded by a number of exiles, of course by the derelict and destitute ones. They loaf on the benches or beg in the street. They have lost all account of the years. Most of them do not know why they have been exiled. Their homesickness, their dire poverty, are heartbreaking. I try to cheer them up, and feed them with tripe soup on Fridays when I earn a few extra coppers. . ."

Rabia stopped and hastily folded the letter. The rest of it must be kept from Selim Pasha. She looked at him furtively. His colour had heightened. He was wondering about the numbers of the men whom he had dispersed to the four

corners of the Empire during the last twenty years. Thousands probably. And most of them to much more uninhabitable places than Damascus. He had never thought of them as individuals. Rabia's tact in skipping over the rest of the sufferings of those poor devils whetted his imagination. Well, he had been nothing but the handle of a huge soulless machine. He had to turn and turn. . . . He had had no qualms of conscience over the rights or wrongs of his official actions. But now, thinking as an individual, he was finding it all a little painful.

'Listen. Rabia, in August it is the thirty-second anniversary of the Sultan's accession to the throne. There will be an amnesty of a sort. I'll try to get as many of the Damascus exiles as I can on the list."

He followed Rabia into the corridor.

"Sorry I couldn't get your father back before your marriage, my child. When is it really going to be?"

"In April, Pasha. Thank you all the same."

Rabia's coming marriage had become the event of the year in the Sinekli-Bakkal. The place hummed and buzzed with gossip. The cobbler's wife, a woman who rarely indulged in idle talk, had become quite talkative, discussing Rabia's marriage while her man drank the customary hollyhock tisane before going to bed. The women at the fountain and the men in the coffee-house fell on the news and enlarged upon it. But it was a bit of a shock to the youthful element round Mr Big-Brother. They had the feeling of having missed something. Who could think of Rabia as an ordinary girl, falling in love and marrying! And marrying such a middle-aged man, in such romantic circumstances! When Mr Big-Brother spat backwards, wiped his moustache on his sleeve, and eyed them, saying "We will call her husband Uncle Osman," his word became law. They would fetch and

carry for the husband as they had done for Rabia Abla. They discussed at some length the wedding present which they would offer. It was to be a toy pump, the model of the one which the local squadron owned. They would have their local yell engraved on a metal placard to be fastened on the pump: "The raiser of dust, the burner of hearts!"

The preparations for the wedding were in the hands of the Princess Nejat. As Sabiha Hanim believed that she had a prior right to meddle in Rabia's life, the younger woman came often to the Konak to discuss matters with her old mistress. The house, including the shop, was being whitewashed and repaired. Because of Osman's mode of life the Princess wanted to have the rooms furnished in European style. Sabiha Hanim was all for preserving the native aspect of the place. Rabia backed the older woman, so a compromise was arrived at. In Rabia's room over the kitchen Osman's piano was to be placed. He played at all sorts of hours. It wouldn't be suitable to have music at any hour in a room over the street. Rabia accepted a table and armchairs, but she grumbled at a bedstead. It would make her dizzy to sleep at such a height.

"He is giving up habits of forty years' standing, Rabia. Aren't you ashamed to be so selfish?" scolded the Princess. But Rabia remained adamant in the matter of pictures. She wouldn't have images in a room where she prayed. Let Osman hang as many pictures as he wished on the walls of the room over the shop. The attic was turned into a room for the dwarf, and the room which he had occupied previously would be Pembeh's. The dining-room would still be the kitchen. It was spacious and pleasant. A table and chairs—instead of stools and a tray on a low stand—were accepted by popular vote.

The next difficult problem was Rabia's bridal dress. The

Princess was for white. She wanted to make a modern bride of Rabia. Sabiha Hanim insisted on purple velvet with silver lotuses embroidered all over it. "We could hire it," Rabia proposed rather timidly. But it was no concern of hers. Sabiha Hanim, Selim Pasha, and the Princess were paying all expenses. Unable to restrict their lavishness, Rabia left them to their own devices. She would have no feasting, no wedding ceremony in her house, beyond the religious ritual which would make her a wife in the eyes of the world.

The preparations lasted two months, and during that time Rabia was as busy as ever. Her calmness and matter-of-fact bearing surprised Pembeh. But that was only during the day. At night she lay awake, thinking of the life she would live with Osman. And he, on his side, continued his daily round of lessons, but at night he paced up and down in his lodgings, dreaming of Rabia, devising extraordinary schemes of life in the Sinekli-Bakkal.

"Strange that I should accept a new creed? But am I accepting it really? Islam to me is not a religion, it is a way of living, a mere label and a code of human relationship. I can't enter the Sinekli-Bakkal as an inhabitant without that label pinned on my coat. I shall still have my back garden, the preserve of my private life and thoughts. I shall pass under the purple wistaria every day, joking with the women at the fountain. We will let Rakim carry on with the shop. Damn it, why can't I see my future wife and talk things over with her before the marriage ceremony? Well, it is going to be a happy life, good days following good nights, when we will sleep together and wake up together to begin it all over again. She may bear me sons, sons to play with, to teach, to scold. In the month of Ramazan we may give shadow-plays for the street children when our bambini are big enough. One of the boys must be like his grandfather---a great clown! Oh, it is going to be as fascinating as a circus!"

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AFTER all, Bilal did get married a fortnight before Rabia. He and his wife, with their household slaves, left for Macedonia. Rabia's coming marriage remained the only concern of the old couple, and she was married on St. George's Day.

Once more one began to hear the distant beat of drums and the nasal tones of pipes and clarinets, the songs, the patter of feet, and the rattling and whistling of the toy-sellers, and the April air seemed to throb with joy. Rabia's garden wore its spring aspect, all white and pink with blossom. It would have been like a day in Paradise for Rabia if Tewfik had been there roasting lamb and cooking pilaff in the kitchen.

Early in the afternoon the men who would conduct the marriage ceremony arrived. Vehbi Effendi was to represent Osman, the cobbler was to represent Tewfik's daughter, and the four fellow Dervishes of Vehbi Effendi were to act as witnesses.

Said the Imam to the cobbler:

"In the name of Rabia Hanim, the daughter of Tewfik, whom you represent, do you take Osman, the son of Abdullah as husband?" (Any man's father could be called "Abdullah," since that meant "the servant of God," and the name of Osman's titled Christian father couldn't be dragged into this particular ritual.)

"I do."

Said the Imam to Vehbi Effendi:

"In the name of Osman, the son of Abdullah, whom you represent, do you take Rabia Hanim, the daughter of Tewfik, as your wife?"

"I do."

The Imam turned to the four Dervishes:

"Do you bear witness?"

"We do."

Osman and Rabia were man and wife. The Iman, raising his hands, a gesture followed by the others, blessed the union. Beginning with the Koranic quotation, "Marry ye and multiply," he prayed for their lifelong happiness. "May they be as happy as our Holy Prophet was with his wife Ayesha," he concluded.

Hands went up to faces and stroked them, and a chorus of deep "Amins" echoed through the house. Rakim went in and offered sherbets.

All sorts of exciting things were happening in the Konak that afternoon. Tables were spread in the harem, enough to feed all the women from the street of Sinekli-Bakkal. Sabiha Hanim, leaning on a stick, and holding the arm of the beautiful young Princess, went round and saw that her guests were properly served. After dinner a young Imam presided over their prayers. He had a good voice and a classic Arab diction. He made the prayers last as long as he could. It was the only fitting end to the celebration of a Koran-chanter's marriage.

In the reception-hall of the Selamlik, tables were set to feed all the men from the street of Sinekli-Bakkal. The Pasha sat with the cobbler on his right—the man was the chief of the Elders—and Osman on his left. Mr Big-Brother and Rakim were at the same table, and were properly impressed.

"Elders of Sinekli-Bakkal!" Selim Pasha's powerful voice rang through the hall. "I introduce our new neighbour and our son-in-law, Osman Effendi. May he find happiness in his new home and in his new state. May you all find in

him a kind and loving neighbour!"

There was a deep sound without words from the company, which meant assent. Then, during the long courses, the Pasha made little jokes as he talked to them all. Discreetly and tactfully, yet humorously, he gave advice to the bridegroom. The unmarried element held their napkins to their mouths to suppress their loud hilarity, while the married men smiled knowingly, their eyes on their plates.

After dinner Vehbi Effendi conducted the men's prayers. Never had he chosen such appropriate verses from the Koran, never had he chanted them with such lyrical and mystic majesty. He made them as short as he could. This was a fitting conclusion to the celebration of the wedding of a new convert, an artist and musician.

After the prayers the Pasha's steward in person held the lantern to light the way through the street for the bridegroom. The neighbours walked after him in silence. Mr Big-Brother and the other members of the fire brigade were all in their picturesque holiday uniforms, and they swung their coloured lanterns as they walked. The free jests and the inconveniently personal remarks in which they were wont to indulge when accompanying a bridegroom to his home, were made in whispers. At the door of Rabia's house they stood for a moment as she watched Osman Effendi enter the shop.

Pembeh waited, lamp in hand, in the shop, and walked before him up the stairs. She opened the door of Rabia's room and made him pass before her.

Clad in purple velvet embroidered with silver lotuses, the bride stood leaning against the piano. Rising from the modestly cut neck of the gown, her long slender throat was like a lily-stem in a tall richly coloured vase. She held her thin hands folded on her bosom, and her head was diffidently bowed. In that mingling of sobriety, spareness of line, and

gorgeousness of colour she looked more than ever like an old Persian print.

He watched her from the door, as strangely and ingenuously moved by the sight as he used to be in his childhood by the sight of a Madonna in her niche.

Pembeh touched him on the shoulder and pointed to a prayer-rug spread at the threshold of the room. Man must thank his Creator, the Giver of all joy on earth, at the threshold of such happiness.

The gypsy closed the door and went out. He prayed for a moment, and then, rising, went to his wife.

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HE was already comfortably settled in his own armchair by the piano. "The Princess has chosen a pretty pink shade," he thought, as he noted with some satisfaction the rosy light that bathed the corners of the room which were becoming so familiar to him. Rabia was closing the curtains as an April shower was pelting the window-panes. Her cat had climbed on to his knees, and had curled itself up, purring.

They had lingered a while in the kitchen after dinner, talking to Rakim, before coming upstairs. "Once a week at least you should go to the coffee-house down the street," Rakim had told him. "You visit the Konak often enough. Though you are chummy enough with them all in the street, they will take you for a stuck-up aristocrat if you don't get more intimately acquainted with your neighbours. After all, you are an inhabitant of the poorer section of the Sinekli-Bakkal."

"But it is only two weeks since they got married," Pembeh had snapped at him.

"I shall do it to-morrow evening," Osman had promised. "What do you say, Rabia?"

"You shouldn't consult her on such matters," Rakim scolded. "Women should have no voice in men's affairs."

"But I don't object to his going to the coffee-house, little uncle," Rabia had protested. Still, she was glad he had put off going there. Neither of them welcomed the idea of spending an evening away from the other.

He watched her lazily from where he sat, going to the cupboard to put on her nightdress. She had the absurd habit

of dressing and undressing in that dark cupboard—she had many more such ridiculous habits. She emerged from it in her white nightdress, her long braids swinging on her back. Taking a floor cushion, she sat down on it, with her back against the divan. On her lap was a piece of sewing, but she did not work at it. She was waiting for something to happen before she would take it up. He knew quite well what she expected. He usually played a little, very softly and wanderingly, and she always remained in that posture on the floor, listening while she sewed.

To-night he would have preferred a talk. Talking was his pet hobby; it was almost a dissipation for him, and he missed a certain form of it in the Sinekli-Bakkal. It was true that he indulged it with quite a number of different people. There was Rakim, there was Pembeh, and there was that delightful Sabiha Hanim, who had adopted him at once. There were also the neighbours of all ages and of both sexes who chatted with him whenever or wherever they could get the chance. In their own limited way they charmed him with their simplicity and friendliness, and their very peculiar sense of humour. But after a week he noticed that he was missing the intellectual intercourse, the metaphysical or political discussions which he used to enjoy with his friends. Vehbi Effendi had been one of the principal friends with whom he had enjoyed such talk. But since Rabia's marriage the Dervish had retired for a time into some secret cell. He would be away for a month at least, and Osman no longer visited the houses where he could enjoy intellectual conversation. Rabia herself was not a great talker, but her comments were pithy and intelligent. She had a genius for evoking sudden, vivid images by the tersest phrases. And he loved to watch her thoughtful face as she puzzled out the meaning of his more paradoxical and extravagant sayings.

Dangling his bedroom slippers from his toes and fidgeting

in his chair, he could see from the expectant expression of her face that she could not be drawn into a quasi-philosophical discussion. He rose, and decided to play. He could hear her sigh with satisfaction before his fingers struck the chords.

He always improvised in the evenings, and for her his improvisations were the milestones of his progress through life in the Sinckli-Bakkal. She studied his moods through those errant airs, measured his nearness to her by the proportion of minor tones that crept into his playing, by the incursion of Oriental rhythms into his brilliant Western harmonies. When nothing familiar, nothing reminiscent of the tunes of her own land appeared in his improvisations, she was disappointed, even a little anxious. They were the golden webs which she was weaving round her man's heart. To night, as she watched the play of muscles on his bent back, while his fingers wandered over the keys, she felt herself up against the tightly closed shutters of his soul. He was purely alien to-night. Perhaps he felt lonely among them all. He might one day leave them with that suddenness and incalculableness which characterised all his actions. No, she would yet acclimatise his soul, domesticate his body, tie him to herself. . . .

Unaware of the complexity of her thoughts, his fingers moved on idly while he himself pondered over the first two weeks of his married life with Rabia. His marriage was a great event, but utterly different from what he had expected. There was nothing of the perpetual excitement of the circus about it. Nothing could be quieter and more uneventful, no honeymoon could have had more routine in it. In a way, it was soothing. Further, he was even more fiercely in love with Rabia than he had been. But she differed altogether from the women he had known in love. Her attachment was unmistakable. He had never been served and taken care of in this personal way by a woman whom he loved. He thought

that the quality of her love was tempered with tenderness; that was perhaps the most predominant aspect of her love. He found in her hardly any of the fitful passions and vagaries of an Oriental woman in love—or, at least, what he imagined an Oriental woman in love would be. It was only when he played that he felt her throb with passionate admiration for his genius; it was only when his fingers were flying over the keys that he was conscious of her as a tamed little wild soul utterly at his mercy. But she did not seem to share in what he called his actual love-making. Her sense of humour in his ecstatic moments was disquieting; that subtle crooked smile hovered over her mouth. And he was always obliged to curb his passionate wooing because of the dread of that half-smile round her lips. Was it because there was such a vast difference of age between them? "Damn the woman. I am getting morbid!" he said to himself, and he turned on the piano-stool to look at her.

She was sitting in the same posture. The sewing remained untouched on her knees. Her features had not relaxed; they showed none of the ecstatic expression which they were wont to assume when he played. On the contrary, they were set and determined, with the vertical line between her eyebrows. He went and sat by her on the floor, his legs stretched out beside hers. She leaned a little forward for his arm to encircle her in comfort. Was it an act of obedience because he was her husband, or was it because she was happy to be near him? His fingers tapped her forehead, almost played an air on its wrinkled surface as he said: "There is something new and strange behind that, Rabia."

"I too had that feeling to-night, Osman. I believe it was because of your playing. I thought of what Vehbi Effendi once said to me. There will be the past between us all our lives. . . ." Her lower lip unconsciously curled like that of a child about to cry.

"Let us demolish the past, Rabia. Tell me about your childhood, about your mother and grandfather, about everything I have not known. I am especially curious about your grandfather. I will go to the Mesjit on Friday to see and hear him. I am dying to see the old man. Why can't we make it up with him?"

"Don't say that, Osman. If you only knew what a frightful man he is." She began to tell him about the days when she was being trained as a Koran-chanter, and of the day when the Imam had thrown her doll into the fire. It was a pathetic and childish tale, but she gave it a comic touch because of the caricature of her grandfather's pomposity, condemning a doll to fire in grandiose Arabic sentences of commination. The past that they feared so much as a perpetual ghost between them was fading away. He laughed in his happy fashion.

"Now to bed, Rabia. To-morrow I am going to take you to Pera, to the Bon Marché, where you can see and buy the prettiest dolls which you never had as a little girl.

"Perhaps," he said, when they were in bed, "you will have a living doll. One that your old husband could play with too."

"If and when I have the living doll I shall never let it be thrown into fire"--and her voice took on the passionate ring with which she chanted the Birth Song of the Prophet.

"So this is a new dress, Rabia!"

"Of course. . . . It is silk. The first one I wear in the street. I got it for going out with you, Osman. You would be ashamed of such a humble thing as the coarse woollen gown of a working woman."

No, he couldn't be ashamed of anything she might wear. She conferred something of her personality on her clothes. The present dress consisted of a loose skirt and long cape falling down below her knees. The cape went over the head,

and there was a black veil to it, which was thrown back. It was an old-fashioned thing, and looked like an ungainly moving bag. But her face, framed in the nun-like folds, and her unconscious dignity of gait captivated him. He noticed in the streets that although men made impertinent remarks to women closely veiled and fashionably attired, they dared not address her, or even stare at her. Brave eyes, eyes that looked straight into the eyes of men, commanded respect even in such a pretty face as hers. Well, the girl had a perfect genius for putting sex-consciousness where it belonged . . . restricting it to privacy, to the life behind walls.

He felt like a child on holiday, and would have liked to hold her hand. It wasn't to be thought of. She insisted on maintaining the proper street decorum. Yet she felt even more like a child than he did, and insisted on walking over the Galata Bridge. Overhead was a real Istanbul sky, the blue of a Byzantine mosaic or a peacock's tail. Not a speck of cloud. A flood of blazing, molten gold flowed down to earth from a huge bowl of fire in the zenith, bathed everything in light, trickled over the surface of all things. On their left the masts and sails of the Golden Horn shimmered with it as they popped up and down on the waters. On their right the ferries and the barges rose and fell on the playful green sea. A military band passed, and the crowd walked in step with its tune.

In the main street of Pera he led her along the pavement, pointing to the display in the windows of the European shops. He longed to have her ask for silks, for jewels, for a hundred frivolities. He didn't dare to offer them. She did not wear the pair of lovely emerald ear-rings which he had given her, for the simple reason that her ears were not pierced. When Pembeh offered to pierce them she replied, "Women would have been born with pierced ears if they were to wear ear-rings." He longed to take her to one of the

big fashionable shops and order pretty frocks for her. How could he do so when she had that crooked smile on her lips? It made her look like a child wise beyond her years, tolerating the silly fancies of the grown-ups out of politeness.

The people took them for a provincial couple. She laughed as she pointed to three young women who came towards them wobbling on high heels. They were elaborately made-up, and wore very short capes and very tight skirts. All three nodded to Osman and passed on.

"Who are they?" she asked.

"Pupils of mine; rather pretty, eh?" He watched her face for a sign of jealousy. It was full of scorn.

"Uncle Rakim imitates monkeys better than they ape European women."

In the Bon Marché she stuck to the toy department. She threw back her head and laughed gaily as an employee showed her a grey donkey with a bell at its neck. It tinkled when the donkey shook its head, and when the employee touched a button in its belly it brayed. The sad-looking gorilla with a brown coat and a top hat she bought for Rakim. The teddy-bear she bought for Pembeh. With a number of French and Greek children she stood watching a toy train going round and round on its rails. They came out of Bon Marché with their arms full of packages.

That evening they asked Rakim and Pembeh to their room. In their excitement over the toys they forgot that Osman was to have gone to the coffee-house that night. Rakim and Rabia did a dancing monkey act, Rabia playing the gypsy owner and Rakim the monkey, to amuse him. Pembeh sang and clapped her hands. He too clapped his hands and laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks. What made this rather restrained people so childlike at times, he wondered

Osman had taken to the coffee-house at the corner like a

fish to water. Rabia was glad, partly because it showed that he had found closer intercourse with the people of her street entertaining, and partly because she had found herself unable to sustaining an intellectual level in conversation for as many hours as Osman demanded. It was a waste of energy for her. There was no measure in him. That was the reason perhaps which led him so often to seek for something new. He wore every interest into shreds by over-indulgence. She couldn't help thinking of Vehbi Effendi's remark about Osman's restlessness. With her, attachments and backgrounds had to grow and become permanent. She loved things because of their lasting familiarity, but she had a vague fear that habits might mean chains to him. Novelty had a greater hold on him than permanent things.

"I am having nasty thoughts because I am always afraid of his leaving me one day. I do hope something new will turn up before he gets fed-up with the coffee house. Lord, I couldn't live without him. I am his wife for ever; let him be my husband for ever!"

"Rabia, are you awake?"

She dragged herself out of sleep and out of her warm bed. He had lighted the lamp. He had just come from the coffee-house. The familiar brusque movements of the man in the lamplight dissolved the dregs of the uneasiness left in her mind because of her worried thoughts before she had gone to sleep. He was there, he was going to be one of the permanent visions of her life. She was already helping him to undress.

"But you mustn't get out of bed to undress me as if I were a babe in arms!"

She didn't answer. She was only half awake. Her lashes veiled her half-closed eyes, and her cheeks were flushed. Yet

she pulled off his clothes and folded them on the divan as deftly and carefully as if she had been wide awake. She even insisted on taking off his shoes and putting on his slippers with her own hands. It was useless to remonstrate with her. He grumbled, but he liked to feel her long fingers going over his body, dressing and undressing him. Behind her continual service there was a sense of ownership.

He sat on the chair and let her put on his slippers. She was on her knees now. The smell of her! Half Adrianople soap, half clover, and half her own healthy young skin. It made him think of fresh grass, open fields, and virginal forests, everything that is elemental and clean. She was leaning now over his knees, the warmth of her cheeks and the touch of her hard little breasts against his body.

"You are asleep, child."

"Hiiiiiiiii!" She emitted a drowsy sound.

He put out the lamp and crept into bed. She was under the blankets. His arms held a warm but limp form, already asleep. Rabia herself was not there; her body retained the unresisting passiveness of a kitten. It was like water that had taken the form of the receptacle into which it had been poured. There was an exquisite subtle softness about it, but it remained undisturbed by the wild hunger of his senses. He covered her shoulders and moved away from her. He himself lay awake, listening to her regular breathing. He longed to concentrate his mind on something which was not Rabia, but it was riveted to the sleeping form beside him. The marriage of souls could be consummated between human beings of all ages and temperaments, but the mating of bodies required quite a different sort of maturity on both sides. He was forty and she was eighteen. Well, for pure maturity of heart, poise of mind, and common sense in the details of daily life, she was far ahead of him. Her caresses had the effect of healing streams; there was peace and

security in her affection for him. What else should he ask? Let him be satisfied with the spells of appeasement she brought into his tormented life.

The cobbler called for Osman on Friday about noon, to take him to the mosque. Rakim had refused to go; he preferred his lazy chat with Rabia and Pembeh in the kitchen during the noon hours on Friday when the shop remained closed to customers. The cobbler was pleased to see him share their great social and religious ceremony, but Osman was going to satisfy his curiosity about the Imam. They walked through the Sirekli-Bakkal talking quietly. From the first night Osman had gone to the coffee-house the cobbler had shown a benevolent interest in him. Whether it was due to the fact of his being Rabia's husband or to his own sympathetic personality no one could tell. After all, it was a good thing. Impecunious and simple as the man might be he was the most important member of the poor community. Without this man's approval Osman would have found it difficult to step into the magic circle of the Sirekli-Bakkal in so short a time.

The cobbler was advising him now in decent and measured terms to be careful of his attitude towards Mr Big-Brother and his group. They were brave lads, no doubt, but an undue interest in their picturesque wildness might encourage them in their rackety ways. Osman realised that he must steer warily between the older and respectable group represented by the cobbler and the more youthful element represented by Mr Big-Brother. He was partial to the latter.

A horizontal shaft of light stretched along the street, a narrow line of warm golden radiance in the middle, while under the eaves on both sides were two parallel lines of shade. No children were playing in the street at the moment. A single woman was at the fountain. She was Muharrem's

mother, and the boy himself was there helping her with the heavy pails. He stood and saluted the cobbler with the respect due from an apprentice to a patron, while she eyed Osman gloomily. She was Rabia's only enemy in the street.

They were the last to enter the courtyard. Around the circular fountain in the middle some of the men were at their ablutions. A few sat on its marble steps, drying their feet with their big handkerchiefs; some were walking towards the mosque, pulling down their shirt-sleeves. An old elm spread its wide branches like a green umbrella over the fountain. In a distant corner of the yard were a few ancient graves, marked by moss-covered, tumbling tombstones with worn out inscriptions. Huge turbans and fezzes of stone leaned over or lay broken on the ground. The dead were really dead in this land. After the final ceremony of laying the bodies in the graves and erecting the stones with inscriptions, they were left alone in the earth. To their spirits rose prayers and chants, year after year, even day after day, but their mortal remains were mere matter, like the stones and earth. In no other country had Osman seen such neglected cemeteries. Only the graves of the spirits which still took part in human affairs received attention—the graves of saints and great kings.

In the dank and neglected little burial-ground Osman noticed one single trim and tidy grave. It was that of a humble local saint. There was a wooden railing round it, and red roses climbed on every side of it. Those spots of living red under the shadows and amidst the wild and sombre labyrinth of the ivy were sudden as flames. Behind the graveyard, on the wall of the courtyard, there was a rectangular window with a sober but beautiful tracery of wrought iron. Behind it women's faces were peering at the saint's tomb. Osman understood that the fresh candles in the cage-like lantern over the tomb were their gifts. There

they stood, evidently trying to make the saint realise what they wanted of him in return for the light that would illumine his grave that night.

What a rich harmony in green the cypresses created! The old trees with their dark-green leaves and gnarled trunks, the young trees thrusting their graceful tapering heads with their lighter and fresher young colours into the cloudless spring blue! And what a background for the small white mosque with its little dome and its slim white minaret! In a perpetual flow of sunlight, children played and pigeons cooed in the open part of the courtyard. The men were silent. In the house of Allah pigeons in love and children at play seemed the fitting sort of life.

"Let us go in," said the cobbler in an undertone when Osman approached him after his inspection of the graveyard.

They walked to the entrance. By the worn leather curtain at the door the cobbler stood and took off his shoes. Osman did the same. They lifted the curtain and passed into the mosque, carrying their shoes in their hands. They stepped into a curiously cool interior. Rows and rows of men, their backs piously bent and the soles of their bare feet all in rows. Osman passed through them, following the cobbler to the front rank.

He knelt beside Fehmi Effendi, the cobbler, just behind the dim marble alcove which was the Mihrab, the Moslem altar. He could just make out the Imam's back in the shadow; a vague, motionless heap of black with a pile of white muslin on top of it. Osman could see nothing of the man but the two ears, carefully freed from the folds of the turban. They stood out and had a life of their own. Merely the ears of a sickly and anaemic old man; but they were like eyes stuck on at the back of a head; one could feel their watchfulness, their absolute sensitiveness to the life behind

them. Because Osman was looking at a pair of human ears, his own began to listen with almost painful intensity. He could hear nothing, but he had the sensation of a sound. He was both tortured and fascinated by it. There were no words pronounced, but lips moved, and there was an uncanny collective sound, as expressive as the secret life of a silent forest.

No wonder the place reminded him of a forest. Here men were nothing but a mass of trees moving hither and thither with the self-same rhythm, as though a mighty gale were blowing through their ranks. He realised this more acutely when a bell-like voice called "Allah Ekber, Allah Ekber," and the congregation rose with an impressive rustle. The Imam was chanting now, conducting the prayers. Incredible to hear such a deep booming tone, such a stylised and powerful voice, emerging from that puny and shabby black bundle. Osman could at once recognise the priest who handles congregations in that voice. It sounded like a fierce hammer, beating in time against a marble column. He could not understand the meaning of the words, but he was conscious of their deep significance of hatred. Like some relentless force of Nature the voice pealed through the mosque. awakening weird echoes. The ranks of men fell and rose, fell and rose. He himself had become a part of that man-forest, swayed by the voice from the altar.

At last they were on their knees. Then the Imam rose and went to the pulpit. As he ascended the lighted steps, Osman could see that the black coat was almost green with age and full of patches. But when the old man turned his face to the congregation from the height of the pulpit Osman forgot all about the man's pitiful poverty. The deep orbits in the cadaverous face were reminiscent of craters, and in them smouldered a vague, sombre glow like the glow of lava. Osman could not take his eyes off them. They seemed, like the Imam's ears, to be things apart from the sallow and

unhealthy old countenance. A round white beard, a short moustache, and a mouth with hatred written all over it, completed the face. Osman expected the man to snarl and show his teeth. But the Imam was toothless, and from the sombre cavity which was his mouth flowed Arabic sentences set to religious music.

Well, he had come to see Rabia's grandfather, and he had seen him. What next? He must go and see the man in the home in which Rabia had been born and bred. He must also help the old man. Osman was touched by the evidence of poverty in the Imam's dress. He seemed so pitiful as he came down the steps of the pulpit. There was no love lost between him and his congregation. That was obvious to anyone. They allowed themselves to be led in prayer by him because he was a past-master in ritual, and had an extraordinary voice, and great experience of ceremonial. He looked incredibly feeble of body. Yet, strangely enough, there seemed to be no sense of loneliness in his manner. He was rapt in his religion, which meant to him everlasting hatred. Well, love and hate, they were after all like light and darkness, like day and night, like sound and silence. They were the right and left swings of the universal pendulum. The phases in between might be different, but they were ephemeral. Only the two ends of the swing, love and hate, love and hate, were fixed in life for ever.

They were waiting for Osman to begin lunch. The door of the kitchen was open, and the garden looked lovely. Yes, he was gradually falling into the rhythm of life in Rabia's community. Should he speak of his experience and impressions in the mosque? No one asked him for them. Rabia was in a hurry to keep an appointment, a preliminary visit to some people on the other side of the water, in order to arrange for some future lessons. Rakim went into the shop. It was time to open it. Osman was left to his own devices.

50

THE high wall of the courtyard hid the first two stories of the Imam's house from the street. Osman scanned the third story. He could see no sign of life there, yet from the way the end of a white curtain waved in the breeze, out of the lower aperture of a lattice, he understood that the window behind it was open. The Imam must be in that room, but there was no answer to his loud knocking.

"Pull the bell-rope at the side, sir," said a voice. He turned, and saw Muharrem standing behind him, his hands under his leather apron. The boy approached and began to pull the rope vigorously.

"Who is there?" boomed the Imam's voice from behind his lattice.

"Someone to see you on business, Imam Effendi," the boy called; then, winking at Osman, he added: "You must have some business, one which means money, if you want to make him open the door."

The boy waited for a while. When he heard steps in the courtyard he hurried away, mimicking the Imam's "Who is there?" The old man couldn't utter a single word without chanting it.

"What is your business?" the Imam growled, holding the door only half open.

"I couldn't tell you here, sir."

"Then come in."

They crossed a tidy stone courtyard. Long lines of rope were stretched crosswise over the yard. Someone fond of washing must have lived there once. At the corners were earthenware bowls of water. Sparrows and pigeons hopped

around them, and walked about the court round the Imam's feet. To Osman this friendship with feathered folk seemed inconceivable in this incarnation of hate.

"Take off your shoes," the Imam ordered before they entered the house.

Osman obeyed, and followed the Imam into a marble entrance-hall. They walked up the stairs in absolute silence, while the Imam leaned heavily on the balustrade. On the third floor the Imam entered a small room and beckoned to him. A corner divan, a cupboard, a small desk and a larger one constituted the furniture. They sat on the divan and stared at each other.

"What is your business?" the Imam asked in his crossest tone, without the preliminary inquiry as to his guest's health.

"I am Rabia's husband. I am your son-in-law," answered Osman, feeling slightly foolish.

"That hell-bound female is no longer any relation of mine."

"I've come to offer you help."

"Help?" His Adam's-apple moved up and down. "You mean restitution. Has the woman repented? Is she going to pay me her fees for her chanting?"

"She doesn't know I am here. I've come to make restitution on my own account." He humoured the old man, though he knew there should be no question of restitution. But overcome with curiosity, he asked:

"Why should Rabia's chanting fees be yours?"

"Why? I spent money and time, I took pains with her, I taught her the art of a Koran-chanter, I housed and fed her when her father was away. She forsook me in my old age and want. By Allah, every piastre she gets for her chanting is mine by right!"

"I will give you five hundred piastres every month as an

allowance. You are my wife's grandfather."

"Nothing but restitution, do you hear? She is not my grandchild; I've cast her out of my life, cursed her, and will curse her with my last breath. Perhaps you are taking up my precious time for nothing! Get out of here. . . ." He rose and showed Osman the door.

Osman did not move. He was taking out five gold pieces from his purse. He handed them to the Imam. The outstretched fingers tremblingly closed over them; the old eyes glittered. Then, pulling out a purse from his bosom, the Imam carefully put the golden pieces away. It was years since he had set his eyes upon gold. What haggling, what a waste of breath to squeeze a few silver pieces from those who came for certificates! He eyed Osman curiously.

"Do you earn all that by teaching the devil-invented instrument to the children of Moslems?"

"I do."

"Have you done nothing else in your life?"

"Yes, I was a kind of Imam myself once."

"You mean a priest, a Hell-guide of infidels." The Imam spat out the words with infinite scorn.

"You can put it that way if you wish. But I have accepted the true faith to marry your granddaughter. I expect to go to Heaven." Osman struggled valiantly to keep his features straight.

"If you think that will save you, you are mistaken. She herself is predestined to hell-fire. It is written over her forehead. Everyone in this cursed community is doomed. Verily they will stumble and fall into the bottom of the Pit!" the Imam finished, almost chanting the last sentence.

"They all seem a God-fearing lot, and they go to the mosque."

"That won't save them either!"—and he gloated over the finality of his neighbours' cruel aftermath.

"Why?"

"Because they laugh, because they enjoy earthly things. The heart of the Heaven-bound must be rapt in fear and contrition, it must ignore joy, nay, must hate it. Don't you hear their sinful giggles? And she, even when she was that high, even when she was learning to chant the Holy Book behind that desk"—and he pointed to the smaller desk by the cupboard door—"she managed to squeeze pleasure out of the divine art."

"I should like to enter into theological discussion with you some time, grandfather."

"You can do so when you bring the next instalment," answered the Imam shrewdly.

In the street he realised that Rabia must have inherited more from Tewfik than from this sinister old ogre. There was serenity, contentment, happiness in the girl. But Osman's interest in the Imam had not waned.

With the month of June a great heat enveloped the city. The air was that of a Turkish bath; a hot wet mist that penetrated one's very bones. Man and beast wandered in search of a cool corner to breathe in. The dogs lay curled under the eaves in an almost cataleptic state. The puppies which ventured out of the shade had hanging tongues, and their woolly sides panted quickly. The children had gone to the graveyard to play under the cypresses. In the shaft of horizontal light, that fell along the street between the eaves clouds of flies, with atomic specks of brilliant red and green on their wings, swarmed and buzzed in their myriads. And the street of the Sinekli-Bakkal stank—oh how it stank!

Osman proposed to take a summer-house somewhere by the Bosphorus. Rabia laughed. Who in the Sinekli-Bakkal had ever heard of anyone taking a summer house? It wasn't done in her set. Wasn't it pleasant enough in the evenings?

It was. The garden was cool, and they spent Friday a
noons in the garden of the Konak. Especially in the vege
garden, where it was very fresh and shady. In spite c
this, Osman was irritable during the week. It was diffi
to get to distant addresses for his lessons. The dirty,
smelly streets were so disagreeable to walk through. He
a cab to bring him home, but he left it at some distance
the street. He couldn't keep his place in the communi
he were seen driving in a cab too often. Rabia herself i
took a cab. She came home soaked, her lashes white
dust. To Osman it seemed that to act the poor man
back street, in the hot season, when you were used to
ence and comfort, was more than heroic; it was marty
pure and simple.

He remonstrated with Rabia. He asked her to give
least her music lessons. Her chanting he wouldn't inte
with, because it was an art. But why should she toil as she
He had enough money for her and hers. He was read
help Tewfik in the largest and most generous way if
would let him. She didn't answer. Her lips stubb
locked, she sat or moved about the room. Her refus
discuss the matters on which they disagreed made him b
over them all the more.

51

VEHBI EFFENDI paid his first visit to Rabia after h marriage on an afternoon in late June. It was his fir visit to anyone after leaving the cell into which he h retired in April. Rabia's pleasure was unmistakable, ar Osman's was perhaps even more so. It meant talk of tl kind of which he had been deprived for so long. Vehl Effendi must dine with them, and must spend the evenir in their back garden.

Pembeh swept the garden and watered it with more tha usual care. She spread a carpet over the mat, and brougl down soft cushions for everyone to sit on. With her ea nature, she sympathised more than Rabia could wit Osman's weakness for comfort and a soft life. Why shouldn one enjoy the very best of everything within reach? Raki helped her to hang the orange-coloured lanterns on tl trellis, for there would be no moon; only a sprinkle of gold specks in the deep purple overhead.

Rabia fried egg-plants and beat up sour milk with garl for a sauce. Vehbi Effendi and Osman remained upstair rapt in talk; Rakim taking up coffee from time to time.

After dinner, his back to the familiar walnut tree, Vehl Effendi smoked his gurgling *nargileh*, his eyes half close while the wide-open eye of his mind took in the significan of the picture of Rabia's married life. It was a success, th marriage. Contentment oozed out of her every movemen She had developed the complacency of a middle-aged matro which was highly amusing. Vehbi Effendi thought th something in her had slowed down. At all events, she w perfect as a housewife; no fault could be found in the w

she administered to her husband's bodily needs. What delicious fried egg-plants she had given them!

It was not so easy to decipher Osman in his new life. Though he had talked with his old gusto in the room upstairs, there were longish spells of silence during which he sat motionless. One couldn't have imagined it in Peregrini. Altogether the man had fallen into a more moderate tempo. Was that Rabia's work?

The object of Vehbi Effendi's curiosity lay on his back, his head resting on his arms, his face to the sky. The heat that deepens with sunset lay heavily in the air. Not a breeze, not a breath.

"I've seen Rabia's famous grandfather," Osman said by way of breaking the silence.

"He goes to Friday service occasionally," his wife explained.

"What a conductor of religious ritual! What a booming trumpet of a voice! I don't mind the fierce hatred that emanates from his chanting."

"You have always liked people who persecute, who torment others," Rabia said.

"Have I?" He was becoming interested. "In this case I do. There is something grandiose about his unrelenting disapproval of the human race."

"Of course," came rather sarcastically from his wife, "you were not his grandchild, you were not under his tutelage in your childhood. You probably would have ended in a lunatic asylum if you had listened to his gruesome talks about Hell."

Passion was creeping into Rabia's serene voice. It disturbed Rakım, and Pembeh began to hum the lively tune of "It poured on the road to Scutari," which was so popular at the time.

"Let us speak of something pleasant," Rakım begged.

But Osman wouldn't leave Rabia alone. He felt as if an inner curtain was fluttering behind her serene soul. A glimpse of what was behind it always fascinated him. He belonged to the West, where men vivisect dumb creatures to learn about the mystery of life. He would willingly vivisect a living heart to make it yield up its secrets

"If he were to die . . . wouldn't you like to receive his last blessing? You should have more filial affection, Light of my Eye." He was probing her soul a little further.

"He has no blessing to give. Let him die and be buried in the dark earth. Let him be eaten by centipedes and snakes!"

"Shuuuut," said Vehbi Effendi, almost distressed. But he couldn't stop her now.

"But he frightened children with those horrible things, Effendim. He gave one no peace, he constantly prophesied a horrible life after death, and painted the picture of a savage God. I hate him because I can never get rid of the fear he has stamped on my heart."

Vehbi Effendi dropped the mouthpiece of his *nargileh* and sat up. He had listened to the little matrimonial skirmish serenely. But this outburst touched his domain. It was the cry from that sick spot of her soul which had been branded by her grandfather's insane talk. And Vehbi Effendi considered himself the keeper of Rabia's soul.

"Listen Rabia. Never allow fear to raise its head in your heart. It is the only thing which I believe God did not create It must have been conceived by men and beasts in their early helplessness. It is nothing but a chimerical monster."

"What does it look like?" Osman sat up. This was what he so much enjoyed.

"An octopus which winds its tentacles round every living mind" Vehbi Effendi began, in a whimsical tone; but as he continued his voice became intense, and vibrated in the

stillness of the garden. "Thousands and thousands of tentacles, clammy, horrible, shapeless, and sightless, coiling round the human heart. For every one that is cut off ten more stretch forth and clutch at us. Priests, such as Rabia's grandfather, threaten the human race with the octopus in the shape of evil spirits and false gods. Tyrants use it as their supreme instrument of power, solitary criminals, all manner of vampires in human form or in human ideas, prey upon men, through the medium of the tentacled monster. No peace, no freedom for man, until the monster is uprooted."

Osman whistled: "What a theme for a Russian musician!"

Vehbi Effendi was silent. In the hush an intense life seemed to be throbbing. The Dervish looked up at the sky. "No fear in the Kingdom of Allah," he whispered. "We too must learn that as His children we must rise above fear, we must crush the heads of the ugly monster we have created."

"How could Allah keep order in the world if man had no fear?" Osman asked again.

"But is God a wicked Sultan, a tyrant, to keep dungeons, fires, hangmen, and torturers to work His will? He will work it out in His own way."

"Go and bring us some cooling sherbet," Rakim ordered Pembeh, wiping his face with his handkerchief. Then, turning to Vehbi, he broke out: "The heat this year keeps the idea of Hell and all sorts of monsters in one's mind. I've never known it to be so hot."

"That reminds me, Rabia, of my last visit to the First Chamberlain's. He was intending to invite you two to spend the summer in the chalet among the woods. It would be deliciously cool."

"He has actually asked me, and I have refused."

"You have . . . and you never told me!" said Osman reproachfully. "I have tried so hard to get Rabia away for the

summer, but she is as stubborn as the old Imam."

"I should go," said Vehbi Effendi, turning to Rabia. "You could take Pembeh, and Rakim could take care of the shop."

"Let us go," begged Pembeh.

"All right," said Rabia in a resigned tone. But she said to herself: "He was getting settled down. The old restlessness may take hold of him after a taste of aristocratic life."

52

FOR a whole week Rabia's household talked of nothing but of the white chalet that stood on the hillside behind the Last Chambérlain's seaside mansion. Taking a summer holiday on the Bosphorus was a big adventure for Rabia, and she grew restless as the day for leaving approached. And about the end of June, on a day when the Bebek Bay was a purple-ruby dream-lake, she and Pembeh reached the chalet in a carriage full of bundles and packages. Ikbal Hanim had sent an old negress to show them the place. Pembeh and the black woman busied themselves with the bundles in the open space before the house, while Rabia stepped into the usual marble entrance of all the houses of her time. Outside the sun was setting. With magic swiftness the colours faded from the sleeping waters. Dark blue shadows flitted across the bay, while overhead an innumerable spread of golden stars glistened.

Downstairs the negress showed Pembeh the stone room which had been fitted up as a kitchen, and the room opposite which had been prepared for the gypsy. Upstairs two spacious rooms opened into a lounge. Their windows were so close to each other that they seemed to be built half of glass. And they contained everything which would make Osman pleased with life—books and all manner of stringed musical instruments, besides a piano.

Rabia peered from a window. The sudden night of the Bosphorus fell over the landscape like a black silken curtain. She saw a mass of blurred shapes—trees, hills, water—all in soft outlines, and in all shades of grey and black, from the lightest smoke to the deepest ebony. Like fireflies the lights

on the opposite shore scintillated lazily. Osman would love it all. She herself was a little lonely. She missed the little street, she was used to definite and palpable border-lines; this elusive, hazy horizon frightened her. No human movement passed before it. At this hour the people in her street would be going to the mosque, and be calling to one another. This change of background gave her the feeling of having turned a corner in her life. She didn't like corners. The moment you turned one you were somebody else. You could never get rid of your former self; so that self on self accumulated, the newest on the top.

A whistle from the depths of the haze startled her. There was a rasping, snorting sound, a tearing of the silken waters. A boat was passing. On the dark void of the bay a long and brilliantly lighted object was moving smoothly. The last ferry-boat was in; Osman would be on that. She flew down the stairs to the landing before the house and waited. Steps were coming up the gravel lane.

"Is that you, Osman?"

"Were you waiting for me, Rabia?"

A shadow moved; he felt the sudden embrace of her arms. The woman he had failed to discover in Rabia was there, perhaps. It needed a change of scene; to get at this concentration of passion you had to remove the familiar objects over which she had spread herself out.

They dined in the lounge. They were strangely quiet during the meal. Silence reigned indoors and out. Then a baritone voice began to sing in the garden: "*Partir, c'est mourir un peu. . .*"

"It is a song Hilmi Bey sang once to Sabiha Hanim," Rabia said, with a puckered face. It was before he had taken Durney to Beyrut. In his lisping voice it had sounded pathetic.

"That absurd parting song!" Osman sneered.

"Don't you like it?"

"Silly stuff, parting, dying, tearful . . . no sense in it."

"But people are sad like that when they leave those for whom they care."

She was trying to remember the parting from her father on the boat. It had just that sort of penetrating inner sadness. One had the feeling of dusk settling down in one's heart. But there must be other sorts of parting. If ever Osman left her, it would be like a storm tearing her very roots out. She rose with a start.

"Let us go into the garden Osman"

By the time they were in the open space before the house the singer had stopped. They went to the back of the chalet and stood among the cluster of pines. Another note, deep and sustained, pealed through the night. It was the note of an organ. Above the house, on the top of the hill, was a large stone building. Its windows were all lighted. The sound she had heard appeared to come from there.

"What is that?"

"An organ; they are playing it in the American school for boys."

She was hearing the organ for the first time, and it took her fancy captive. Hitherto all Western music, even the airs which had charmed her, had too much of the staccato element in them. There was something sustained in this; the passage from one note to another one could hardly be distinguished. It conveyed a sense of continuity, it reminded her of her Koran-chanting.

"If we ever have a boy, I'll send him there"

"Never."

"Why, Osman?"

"You must keep your son away from everything that is not Sheikh-Bakkal. In any case, those who have different blood in their veins have a perpetual warfare in their hearts."

"We are all of different blood in this land, Osman, and we are all so peaceful."

"It isn't only blood, Light of my Eyes. Difference of culture is still more bewildering. Those who are subject to different cultures will have to face a hell of a struggle in their hearts and minds." He stopped for a while, and when Rabia's arm slipped through his he began again, almost hoarsely: "I should like my son to be a harmonious being; no contrasts, no hostile influences tearing at him, pulling his mind hither and thither. You do not know how mixed natures suffer!"

"It would be nice to be mixed like that," Rabia was saying. "You are so many persons at the same time." She chuckled softly to herself as if the son they spoke of were a reality. But at the bottom of her heart she was a little uneasy. She had a vague realisation of Osman's own conflicts. There might be sounds and memories which were pulling him away from her.

"Let us go in," she said, with a catch in her voice.

They called it the happiest morning of their life when they woke to hear the voices on the hills and on the water. Fishermen were singing Greek songs as they floated back on their barges after a night of fishing. During the day the sounds and voices multiplied—the stirring melody of pipes, the beat of drums, the sound of men dancing on the barges that float up and down the Bosphorus. Fierce life, seething and boiling life, throbbed in the landscape, in the very bowels of the earth. There was a stupendous increase of joy in the rhythm of life. Rabia vibrated with it. "Dear God, the pulse of the earth beats louder and louder," she said to herself.

At night they sat in the open space before the chalet. Rabia would bring an arm-chair for him. She herself lay on

her back, her eyes among the stars. Their rays dipped into the sombre blue of the bay. With the flowing of the waters they looked like a continuous golden rain. The two breathed deeply, inhaling the freshness to which the leaves, the earth, and the salt breath of the waters contributed.

Rabia often played on the lute, her back leaning against his knees. She *invariably improvised a sentimental prelude*, but she also invariably sang some burlesque air, usually a song about a speckled cock, the song which the sweetmeat sellers played on saxophones in the Sinekli-Bakkal.

Though her light humour seasoned their romance, he said to himself. "She loves me more than any woman has ever loved me, even in my youth. But that wasn't love at all. It was perhaps wilder and stronger, but only a seasonal, a transient mood. This makes her infinitely more arresting."

The Chamberlain's niece and nephew began to call and drag them down to the mansion by the sea. They made her sing at the window. She gradually became the star singer of that memorable Bosphorus season. Little crowds gathered before the house; on the water the pleasure-boats thickened; there were torches burning in some of them, but the people in them listened in silence. She sang classic airs, and she sang popular songs, and after each song the people shouted applause. "No one will ever be able to awaken the passion I've called forth," said Osman to himself. He had, for the first time in his life, sunk to a secondary plane.

The Princess often invited them to dinner. Vehbi Effendi was always there. Although during the meal the trio of slaves whom Rabia had trained performed she herself very rarely sang in the Palace. The Prince was the only person on Bosphorus that year who regarded her more as a mind than as a voice. He led her on to the balcony opening to the salon, and they walked up and down talking. Osman was no longer subject to his nasty pangs of jealousy. He had all the pride

of the owner of a masterpiece. The others were permitted only to gape at what belonged to him entirely.

Vehbi Effendi once asked her to sing his favourite song.

"I couldn't believe just now in any heart being wrecked and washed ashore," she said. "May I sing you a spring ode?"

Osman rejoiced wickedly; she was drifting away from the spiritual forces that had held her. Nor was it only Vehbi Effendi, with all that he stood for, that had lost vital significance for Rabia during that season. She neglected Rakim shamefully. On Fridays, when he climbed the hill to see her, she seemed always to be somewhere else.

"The way she is wrapped up in her husband . . ." Pembeh would begin her gossip about Rabia's married life, and after a detailed account of it she would add: "No one loves you like Auntie Pembeh; you are the core of her heart, her lamb . . ."

"Shut up, you shameless one!" Rakim would scold. "Why be so explicit about intimate things?"

So passed the month of July, and the first week of August.

On the 19th of August Tewfik might be on the roll of the promised amnesty for some of the exiles. Rabia wanted to be back at Sinekli-Bakkal before that date. Osman implored her to remain until the end of the month; such good news as that she would get anywhere. They were so happy. She complied with his wishes, but she felt dissatisfied with herself. He, vaguely aware of her depressed mood, took her out for a walk in the morning. They wandered as far as the cemetery where Bebek joins the Rumeli-Hissar. The place was a favourite resort of the women from the village. They came with their children on Friday afternoons, sitting on the broken tombstones, making merry and eating pistachios and sweetmeats. Rabia and Osman sat on a solitary rock which looked like a seat especially carved by the sea for the use of

tired walkers. The sea leapt at her feet while she listened to the beat of the waves on the pebble beach. They splashed lazily and softly; the sea was hardly awake yet.

"You ought to see the waves in March, Rabia. I like them angry; they sing better."

"You never enjoy anything peaceful, Osman."

"There should be no peace anywhere least of all on the sea. There must be thousands of souls who have died in it; there must be innumerable disembodied spirits clamouring for rest."

The remark fired her imagination; it also saddened her.

"Since we have been here I haven't chanted for the dead," she said gravely.

"You sing for the living."

"I must open my window and chant in the mornings, breathe it out to the waters."

"Don't let yourself slip into that mood, Rabia."

She hardly listened to him. The landmarks of her past life, which had faded away, were reappearing in her mind; they were reproaching her for her neglect. To be absorbed in those around her, to serve them, was permanent peace. How utterly and selfishly she had been carried away by her own happiness that month!

"Life on earth is naught but sport and idle play," she chanted softly, consoling the dead for not being so intensely and keenly alive as she had been that summer.

They walked back in a subdued mood.

"Let us go into the pine grove behind the house." He pulled her arm as they came to the door of the chalet.

"You go and lie down on the pine-needles. I will be back in a moment."

The soft layer of pine-needles under him was very warm. The sense of coolness in the green shade was only an illusion

of colour; the air was a uniform hot breath on one's face. He lay back and closed his eyes. Dimly he thought he could hear the noise of wheels. "It must be in the College grounds," he murmured.

He must have slept for some time. He opened his eyes with a vague consciousness that someone was looking down at him. Rabia was standing there, wearing her black silk. Her face, in the bundle-like folds, was grave, and she held a bag in her gloved hands, as though she had prepared herself for a formal visit in town.

"Where are you going?"

"Sabiha Hanim has sent the carriage and the housekeeper to fetch me. She had a serious heart attack last night."

"I am sure she is pretending; she just wants to see you."

She squatted down beside him and hurriedly gave him the news. Hilmi, who had been allowed to travel, had escaped. He had asked permission to go to the Lebanon in the summer, and had taken Tewfik with him. Tewfik had helped him to procure a passage on a French boat, and to get on board in disguise. Hilmi was now in Paris with the Young Turks. The news had nearly broken Sabiha Hanim's heart. She had been sure of pardon on the 19th, and she had been sure of seeing her son.

"Has your father escaped too?"

The little crooked smile appeared on her lips. No, he hadn't escaped. Further, for his share in helping Hilmi to escape he was to be confined in the fortress of Taif.

"Is he going to be the eternal scapegoat of Hilmi?" Osman cried, sitting up and putting his arms round the black figure.

Gently but firmly she disengaged herself. She rose.

"Tewfik loves Hilmi Bey: love means that. I am glad he did what he likes best, without thinking about me. . . ." It was a gladness which brought tears to her eyes.

"I must go with you, my child."

"No; I will stay at Sinekli-Bakkal to-night, and I'll be back to-morrow morning."

She was already gone. He sat down with mixed feelings of acute sympathy and disappointment. The episode would poison the end of their heavenly vacation.

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SABIHA HANIM sobbed on Rabia's shoulder.

"Shhuuuut!" Rabia's hand stroked her back.

"I may never see Hilmi again. . . ."

"Who knows? Even if you didn't, think how happy he must be, talking Young Turkism all day long."

"True," sighed the old woman, lying back. Rabia wiped the tears from the flabby cheeks. But the next moment Sabiha tried to raise her head again.

"I am sure you hate Hilmi. . . ."

"I don't, Vallahi. Don't worry about Tewfik, Effendim. He will manage to turn the place into an open-air theatre."

"So he will, so he will. . . ."

"Now lie back. Don't move, Hanim Effendi. You must do what the doctors say. Shall I give you your medicine?"

"Will you stay by me if I try to sleep?"

"Surely," said Rabia, and she sat beside her on a chair.

It did not take Sabiha Hanim long to fall asleep. She had passed a miserable night. After the wild outburst of grief, which had been too much of a strain on her old heart, she had begun to worry about Rabia. Would she once more forsake her, refuse to come to the Konak? The possibility of losing Rabia's friendship pained her more than Tewfik's predicament. Now that she had no hope of seeing Hilmi it would break her heart if Rabia were to desert her; Rabia's tender concern was soothing to her; it had a greater healing effect than all the nasty medicine the doctors had made her swallow.

The housekeeper tiptoed into the room and whispered in Rabia's ear:

"The Pasha is expecting you in his room. I will watch here. She is asleep."

Rabia found Selim Pasha standing at the door of his room. He scanned her features with an expression of intense anxiety on his face. The blow, Rabia thought, has felled the invincible spirit of the man. What Hilmi had done would crush him more than anything in the world. She had never seen him look so dejected and old. She was filled with greater pity for him than for Sabiha Hanim.

"How is she, Rabia?"

"Sleeping peacefully."

"Thank God!" He looked relieved; then, with a humility in his eyes and voice which touched and puzzled the girl, he said: "My son has again been the means of Tewfik's ruin. Can you ever forgive us, my child?"

"Don't, Pasha. I can't bear to see you in this state. Tewfik loved Hilmi Bey, I am sure he is happy over Hilmi Bey's escape. It is Fate!"

"Sit down, Rabia."

The very lustre of the grey eyes had changed its quality. Though the Pasha had the air of one utterly broken down, yet in his eyes there was a new light. Their combativeness, their domineering pride, had given way to a subtle resignation and humility. She sat facing him in silence, but attention and affection were written on her face.

"I am not sorry for Hilmi, but I would give anything to save Tewfik from Tait. Unfortunately, being Hilmi's father weakens my position. I can no longer look His Majesty in the face or ask him a favour."

"Don't be too hard on Hilmi Bey, Pasha."

"No, I am not. I am too confused for that. Once I used to think that there was a single force which counted, a single force that fashioned human destiny—that of the Established Order. There seem to be an infinite number of forces at play

n human society . . . even in those who seem so helpless, so utterly at the mercy of Governments and Sultans, there is an effective and uncrushable force." He stopped for a while, then began again: "Doubt has entered my mind, Rabia. I now no longer whether I have been right all these years. And . . . I am seventy. I shall soon be called upon to give an account of my deeds to an infinitely greater Sultan."

The change in the man seemed even more striking as he spoke. He had aged very suddenly, leaped over a thousand years. And yet this was not decrepit age, it was not dotage. It looked like a spiritual maturity; the sort of maturity that may come to the young as well as to the old through suffering. It made him stronger, strong in a more complex fashion. The force which had been that of the crude, hard ore had been refined and softened as though by fire. Whatever the process, it had endowed his breast, which had once seemed empty to Rabia, with a human heart. Selim Pasha had gone through a thorough process of humanisation.

"It is Fate," she repeated, sighing softly. He derived a curious comfort from her repetition of the word. He was aware of the capacity of survival and endurance which the belief in Fate conferred on the helpless individual in the East. After all, the fragile willow which bends to the storm may survive while the straight and unyielding oak may perish.

"I have resigned, Rabia. The moment His Majesty accepts my resignation I shall go to Damascus, to fetch Durney. I need to think things over. . . . I want also to see some of the exiles who knew Hilmi and Tewfik. But I haven't told my wife yet . . ."

A slave girl entered with a tray in her hand.

"Here is our lunch, Rabia. Let us eat."

In spite of the trouble hovering over his house, in spite of Rabia's secret anxiety concerning Tewfik, they ate in peace,

even passing remarks concerning the dishes.

They went down to Sabiha Hanim's room together. On the stairs the Pasha said to her: "His Majesty is over seventy; Tewfik is just forty. He has a greater share in the future; he may come home at any moment."

They found Sabiha Hanim sitting up in bed. Her quick mind was already planning to find some way of corresponding with Hilmi. Could Osman, who had European relations, devise the means? She looked at her husband as she asked Rabia the question.

"I am no longer the Minister of Public Security," he said, smiling. "You may hatch your seditious plots in my presence."

"What do you mean?"

"I have resigned."

"You should never give up position and honour like that. . . ." She knitted her brows, but when he added: "I can no longer hound down the Young Turks, and unless you do that you can't be entrusted with the security of the Empire," she leaned towards him, and snatching at his hand, kissed it.

Rabia rose.

"Are you going back to Bebek?" Sabiha Hanim asked.

"No, I shall not go back; I shall remain at the Sinekli. I will send Rakim to fetch my family."

She left them, feeling that the moment was suitable for the Pasha to tell the Hanim of his trip to Damascus.

That evening she and Rakim drank their coffee in silence in the kitchen.

"I could have fetched Osman this afternoon, Rabia," said Rakim, breaking the silence.

Rabia shook her head. She wanted to be alone that evening, to think things out clearly, undisturbed. Osman with his

tigues upset her thoughts. Although she was like a traveller who has just returned from a great adventure, still vibrating with the recollection of it, she was face to face with new calls. She mustn't let herself get absorbed in her personal happiness in that exclusive way. She was not put into the Sinekli-Bakkal for that. There was Sabiha Hanum, Selim Pasha, there was . . . who else? She caught sight of Rakim's sad eyes. Was he the only one left to think of Tewfik?

"Tewfik is still young; His Majesty is over seventy; Tewfik may come back at any moment," she was saying, thinking of Selim Pasha's words. There was conviction in her voice. She had found comfort not only in the words, but in what they implied. That such a staunch supporter of Abdul Hamid should doubt of the durability of the reign gave her food for hope.

"You had better not talk of these things to anyone, Rabia. The walls have ears. Let us be patient; we have waited long, let us wait a little longer. With patience . . ."

"With patience mulberry leaves become silk . . ." she finished the sentence. "Perhaps the good days will come sooner than we expect."

"The fish rots from the head . . . those above us are stinking, the day of cleansing is at hand. . . ."

They remained for hours in the kitchen, their long spells of silence broken by some such old and comforting quotation from the lore of the country.

When Rakim climbed up the winding lane leading to the chalet to deliver Rabia's message, Osman turned. This had stolen two long weeks from his great love-dream on the Bosphorus.

"She shouldn't put Sabiha Hanim's pleasure before our happiness!" he grumbled.

"Well, anyhow, with Tewfik newly confined to a fortress

she wouldn't have been the jolly companion she was," Rakim suggested.

"True; I am a selfish brute." Osman's tone of irritation had given way to one of self-reproach. He was already thinking of all sorts of ways of comforting his wife. But his resentment at being obliged to cut short his honeymoon burned and rankled inwardly. Meanwhile he sat with Rakim, smoking under the pines, until Pembeh should have finished the packing.

They took a carriage from the bridge. The bundles and Osman's portmanteaux were pretext enough for driving up to the door of the shop. That he would be spared the effort of trudging along the ill-kept roads in that dust and heat already reconciled him to the Sinekli-Bakkal. He was prepared to consider the seething, buzzing clouds of flies in the horizontal stripe of sunlight along the street as poetical. In that state of mind he heard a voice shouting:

"Mr Uncle, oh, Mr Uncle. . ."

Mr Big-Brother was racing after the carriage. Osman stopped it and jumped out, saying to Rakim:

"Tell Rabia I will be back in a minute."

Mr Big-Brother led him to the coffee-house at the corner and treated him to coffee in the open under the trellis.

"You've just come in time, Mr Uncle for the annual election of Elders. We, the boys, want to chuck the cobbler this year. He tries to crush the spirit out of the young braves. Of course, we won't do a thing without your advice."

The event was of vital interest to them all. Humble artisans and poor traders, that little bit of communal freedom invested them with democratic dignity; it was a compensation for the threatening and heavy hand of Tyranny perpetually raised above their heads.

Osman was immensely pleased. He had done well to court the favour of the turbulent element in the face of the

cobbler's disapproval. Now he was in a position to do a good turn to the cobbler himself. He had at once reverted to his favourite idea of playing the poor Moslem in a back street. As long as life retained the characteristics of a show he was in his natural element. As a matter of fact, it did not take him more than five minutes to convince Mr Big-Brother of the importance and necessity of re-electing the cobbler. The bloodshot eyes of his listener shone with admiration as he numbered the cobbler's good points. "It shall be done, chief," Mr Big-Brother announced, and they rose. They walked side by side to the door of the shop. Rabia heard Mr Big-Brother shouting a final and additional good-bye to Osman, and she hurried down to meet him.

"I've scrubbed the boards this morning, Osman. They are still wet. Here are your slippers; you had better put them on now."

He could never get used to taking off his shoes at the foot of the stairs. As a matter of fact, he never did take them off until he was in his room and especially wished to put on his slippers. But on the days when the boards were newly scrubbed Rabia abolished this particular privilege of his. She was down on her knees, trying to unlace his shoes in the manner of a dutiful wife.

He patted her pretty head.

"I had better stroll about until the boards are dry. I want to see the cobbler on business."

"Hadn't you better first go to see Sabiha Hanim? She expects you."

"We will do that together to-night. Did you miss me last night, little girl?" His hand had been lifting her chin.

"Please, please, no petting in public. I hear Auntie Pembeh coming down," she whispered, colouring and moving away.

There she was, once more the Koran-chanter, the puritan! He strolled away, but instead of going to the cobbler's shop

he went to the Imam's house. The monthly allowance was about three days overdue.

Osman was surprised when an old woman with a kerchief round her head came to open the door. She recognised him.

"The Imam has been unable to leave his bed for the last three days. I have been cleaning the house and bringing him his soup. I want to go home for a while. Please stay with him till I come back," she said; then, shaking her head, she added: "He looks as if he is getting ready to pass on to the Great Road. May you have a castle in Heaven for being kind to the aged!"

"I won't leave him till you come back, Mother," Osman assured the charitable old creature, who had perhaps undertaken the care of the sick man for the sake of a hut in Paradise.

In the middle of the Imam's room the usual bed of the old-fashioned Moslem was spread on the floor. The Imam lay on it, leaning back against a pile of hard pillows, his knees covered with a flowered print quilt. Round his head was a white bandage, under which, especially at the temples, certain round objects protruded. He was wearing a blue quilted jacket with a tight belt round his waist. There was a feverish glitter in the sunken black eyes, the cheeks were sickly and more emaciated than ever. The powerful nose stood out like a false one, a theatrical disguise, while his nostrils moved fiercely. His difficulty in breathing normally was evident from the way in which his chest was heaving. His breath was rattling. There was no mistaking the gravity of his illness, but an unyielding and stubborn spirit glared out of the eyes in their cavernous sockets. His fingers moved swiftly, telling the coral rosaries on the quilt. The low desk was moved to his bedside, with three fat volumes neatly piled on one another. Beneath it was a glass jar in which three black leeches wriggled in the water. There was a smell

of lavender and onions in the place.

"Ha . . . what do you want?" he growled, without looking at the person who entered the room.

"You are ill, Grandfather. . . ."

The black eyes flashed at Osman and a cross voice scolded rasping ly:

"You are three days late with the money."

To set the old miser's mind at rest, Osman produced the money without replying. The rosaries dropped from the skeleton fingers, they grabbed the gold pieces, and the Imam held them to his eyes, to make sure that they were really gold. Then he pulled out his purse and put them into it caressingly, in spite of the violent tremor of his fingers. He ignored Osman until the purse was safely hidden in his bosom.

"You should engage the woman I saw downstairs to take care of you, Grandfather. You need someone in the house."

"*Estagfurullah!* How am I to pay her? It is she who brings my food and pays for it. You didn't tell her by any chance that you give me an allowance?"

"No, no!"

"Never let anyone know that I have yellow money in my purse. They would cut my throat . . . the rascals, the hussies, the cursed ones . . ." he wheezed.

"But I am going to bring a doctor and pay him myself, Grandfather."

"Ha . . . you will be asking me to eat pig-flesh next. . . . The doctors are all giaours . . . they put the accursed wine into their medicine!"

For a while he could say no more. His chest, his nostrils worked like bellows. Then he put his skinny fingers to his temples.

"I have tied onions there; hammers are beating me there. . . . To-night I will have leeches applied to my back."

"Lie back and don't talk; I will sit here till the woman comes back."

"Give . . . some crumbs to the grey imp . . . I couldn't get up. There are some in the plate," he managed to whisper before he closed his eyes.

"That is mere rambling," Osman thought, but he saw some crumbs in a saucer by the bed. "Jik, jik, jik!" came from the window. A sparrow had squeezed itself through one of the apertures of the lattice, and was hopping up and down on the window-sill, flirting its tail and confirming the Imam's order by dumb show. Osman threw some crumbs to it, and watched it as it perched on the divan.

"Not much longer before I join Emineh," the Imam was murmuring.

"Wouldn't you like to see Rabia, Grandfather?"

"Ha. . . ." He opened his eyes. "Emineh should have left my hand free with the rod. . . . I could have made a Heaven-bound woman. . . . Now the girl will burn for ever and ever . . ." He closed his eyes and snored for a while.

Time hung heavily on Osman's hands. He was torn between pity and perplexity as to what he should do. Then the Imam began to mutter deliriously in his sleep. He was haranguing the parents of the children he must have once taught in the mosque school: "Their bones are yours, their flesh is mine. . . ." A few more sonorous snores, and then again: "The rod, the blessed instrument sent down from Heaven to educate the sons and daughters of men. . . ."

After that his eyes remained closed, and his breath wheezed and rattled like machinery out of gear; the black gap of his mouth opened and closed, but no words came from it.

The woman's clogs clattered in the courtyard, and Osman tiptoed out of the sick-room. Downstairs he gave his orders to the woman, asking her not to leave the Imam alone and

to let him know if there should be a change for the worse. He put a twenty-piastre piece into the woman's hand. She patted his back and prayed for him, saying: "May you sleep on the same pillow with your wife to the end of your days!"

Rabia was out at lunch-time, and Osman had to give a music lesson to one of the young princes at the Yildiz Palace in the afternoon. In the evening they hurried through supper, in order to get to Sabiha Hanım as soon as they could, for that impatient lady had been sending message after message to Rabia, asking her to come at once. Osman decided to tell his wife of the Imam's illness after their visit to the Konak.

On their way thither Osman said to her: "You are already looking used up, Rabia. You shouldn't let the old lady wear you out as she does."

"She will wear out anyone, as long as she wants to," Rabia answered sadly. "She always has people with her."

It was true. No one could refuse her anything, especially when she was in her childish and helpless mood. She had put on a pretty head-veil and freshened the coat of paint over her wrinkled cheeks for Osman. Her eyes were eager, and her lips trembled as she stretched out her bejewelled white hand for him to kiss.

He kissed it ceremoniously. He hardly noticed the unsuitable make-up. In spite or because of her curious mixture of caprice, frailty, and grief, Osman was conscious of a strange authority as well as charm in the old creature. She reminded him a little of the aristocratic old ladies of his childhood. In a mysterious way she made him conscious of class.

The Pasha had sunk to a secondary plane. The evening was taken up by the discussion of how correspondence could be established between Hilmi and his mother. Osman nearly

forgot the Imam. As he walked home with Rabia his mind was occupied with composing the letters which he would write to a few of his French friends in Paris.

He was wide awake when they reached home, and wanted to draw comparisons between the different manner of love-making in the East and in the West.

"Oh, let us talk to-morrow; I am so tired," said Rabia, spreading her prayer-rug.

There was nothing for it but to go to bed. After a time, when he thought she had finished her prayers, he called out to her:

"Your grandfather is very ill, Rabia."

"May Allah make him well," she murmured sleepily, with no animosity in her voice, but also without any personal concern.

"But he may be in want, he may need help. . . ."

"Don't give me unkind thoughts before I sleep, Osman; I am sure he has some buried treasure."

With that he had to be content. He would wait and see what turn the Imam's illness had taken next morning.

"What is it?" Rabia called from her bed, then jumped out and went to open the door Rakim was there, with a very solemn face.

"May Allah give you long life, Rabia," he said; which amounted to the news of a death.

"Who has died? Tell me quickly. . . ." She was stricken with fear and altogether breathless.

"Your grandfather the Imam passed away last night. Tell Osman Effendi to come down; we must see to the funeral."

Rabia's first thoughts had flown to Tewfik. In her sudden relief she felt grateful to the Imam. Among her kith and kin no one's death could have meant less to her. Yet she felt ashamed of her harsh thoughts of the night before, when Osman had told her of his illness.

"May he rest in light," she repeated devoutly. Osman saw her head bowed in a religious gesture. The Koran-chanter in her was getting ready to pray for the appeasement of the tortured old soul. He could almost see the swing of her torso, as when she used to chant requiems.

54

SELIM PASHA'S resignation was accepted. His Majesty sent him a few kind words in recognition of his past services.

"His Majesty's kind words sound like a summary funeral address," said Selim Pasha, and wondered at his own boldness. He had come to take leave of the First Chamberlain. To his own ears, all his little jokes that day sounded as though they had been uttered by some stranger hidden within his breast. Outwardly he missed something—the burden of honour was lifted off his sturdy shoulders. A strange burden that had made his back so rigidly, so arrogantly erect. Now it was a little bent, but the sense of pressure was gone. The long process of questioning and doubt, and the confused internal conflict, had resulted in freeing him from his servitude to power What a relief to believe that the Sultan's Government was only a part of the great world instead of being the whole of it! The old Selim Pasha, the Minister of Public Security, had been a narrow-minded, pompous ass.

"I believe you have been associating with Vehbi Effendi a great deal," said the First Chamberlain.

"I am leaving him in charge of my family while I am in Damascus. At the moment we are in the midst of liquidating our ancient glory. I am shutting up the Selamlik and selling its furniture. I shall rent it as soon as I can find a suitable tenant. The men servants I have discharged, except my steward and old Shevket. I have even sold all the carriages and the horses," he sighed; he had a personal affection for his horses.

"You had a large number of female slaves; what are you going to do with them?"

"All of them have been liberated and endowed in a modest way. They are all well-educated and well-trained girls. Some of them are good musicians. They are already finding situations as housekeepers or teachers. My wife is retaining three elderly liberated slaves to serve her."

"I suppose you have plenty of time to receive callers now."

"I have." The sardonic smile traced two deep parallel lines beside the firm mouth. "But no one comes; that is, no one of my old world, except Princess Nejat. I am trying to cultivate my neighbours of the Sinekli-Bakkal."

"The street to which that lovely young woman with the lovelier voice belongs?"

"Yes, she and her husband are our closest friends. I count on them after Vehbi Effendi to take care of my wife in my absence."

"Why should you go in person to fetch your daughter-in-law? Send your steward; you need rest; it is hard work travelling."

"I want to be away from the old scenes while I make a thorough mind-cleaning. All manner of useless junk has accumulated there."

He tapped his head, the receptacle of waste thoughts, and rose. Some officials with documents in their hands were entering the room of the First Chamberlain.

Towards the evening Selim Pasha walked out of the Konak and strolled in the direction of the coffee-house. His steward hurried after him, carrying his umbrella at a respectful distance, as it should be carried when a Minister of his Majesty uses his legs. The Pasha turned back and called out angrily: "Go back, man, I am not a child to need constant attendance!" and then, in a milder but amused tone, he

added: "I am no longer a Minister, I am a *man* now."

The people in the coffee-house were a little stiff. But he did not mind that. They would get used to him. From the coffee-house he went to call on Rabia. Rakim's eyes stared at him with a mixture of fear and wonder as he passed through the shop and went into the kitchen. Rabia and Osman were in the garden.

"Why don't you two young people come and dine with us?" he called out into the garden.

"Why don't you stay and eat with us in the kitchen?" Osman called back.

"I have been expecting the invitation; thank you!" he answered, joining Rabia on the mat under the walnut tree.

Every night before they slept Osman said to Rabia: "I shall celebrate the day of the Pasha's departure. You are altogether absorbed in the Konak."

"Never say 'I will do such and such a thing' without adding 'Inshallah,'" she murmured drowsily.

"'God willing,' or not willing, I shall celebrate it, little darling."

"Shuuuuut, you faithless one!"

So passed the days, and the 19th of August came. Selim Pasha was leaving on the 22nd. It was his last act of courtesy to his royal master. He would be present at the Royal Jubilee, and would illumine his house. The music, the entertainments, the open buffet, the circumcision of orphan boys, the shadow-plays and Jewish jugglers, were to be omitted. But he carefully calculated the yearly sum spent on such things, and gave it to the cobbler, so that he might apply it—after a meeting of the Elders, and subject to their approval—to the distribution of charcoal among the poor of the Sinekli-Bakkal in the coming winter.

Lanterns were piled round the fountain in the open space

before the house. The steward, Shevket, and the three liberated slave girls were on their knees on the ground, cleaning the lanterns and putting candles into them. Rabia stood and watched them. No one spoke. There was no sound save that of the fountain. The scene was very different from what it used to be on such occasions. The steward listened unconsciously for the sound of the wheels of the private carriages which no longer followed one another into the open space before the house. The women's eyes wandered to the arbour where the musicians used to perform. The silence grew deeper; the ghosts of the days gone by stalked stealthily among the trees. A chord in Rabia's heart was touched. There were clouds overhead, and a strong east wind was blowing through the tops of the tall acacias and the elms. The sultry atmosphere was steeped in an eerie, rosy light. Rabia hated the east wind. It had a lugubrious moan, and its touch was like the breath of fever.

Sabiha Hanim's head leaned out of a window. She was in the room of the Harem where Hilmi used to receive his friends.

"The Pasha is here, Rabia. When Osman comes we will ask him to play. We are too poor to hire an orchestra this year," she laughed.

"I shall be back before Osman comes," Rabia called back. And as she moved through the avenue of acacias she heard the old lady giving an order to the silent group of workers by the fountain.

"You must start lighting the candles at least two hours earlier than last year. You are too few to get them all lighted in time."

Rabia had wandered into the Bostan in search of coolness and relief. There was none. The flushed light of the atmosphere deepened the gloom of the green shade. Through the

intervals between the leaves the majestic mass of moving cloud was visible, tinted by the rays of the setting sun. It was oppressively close. The high walls and the low level of the Bostan protected it from the wind. The roar of the east wind was audible, a vague, distant booming. It was as though the Bostan had been in the grip of a malignant fever. The heat was an invisible but disagreeable presence. The very trees and the earth were sweating. Rabia wiped the moisture from her face and hands, and her eyes searched for the Bostan well. The huge wooden wheel which was used as a primitive mill for drawing the water was motionless; the little buckets hung limply all round it. The small donkey which turned the wheel had stopped. Rabia longed for the splash and sparkle of the water. She shouted at the donkey, but her loud "Ho!" went unheeded. But for the occasional twitch of the ears and swish of the tail as they drove off the flies, it might have been an abnormally large toy donkey, such as Osman had once bought her in a European shop. The sight of the stagnant, clammy, dirty water in the ditch turned her stomach. She was conscious of a strange nausea, as though she had been on a boat with the east wind blowing. The ground beneath her feet rose and fell with an illusive swell.

It wouldn't do to be ill that night. And why should she feel so distressed? The old couple were so jolly. Perhaps it was the sadness of the silent little group of workers by the fountain which had affected her. They seemed to be dumbly but profoundly disturbed by a sense of the inevitable instability of all state in life. One felt it in their furtive looks and their closed lips. Rabia herself had become vaguely afraid in respect of her own happiness. That too might change into sorrow. One never knew what the future held in store. The unseen hand of Fate was at work, destroying all human felicity. Her fingers tapped her forehead:

"I know not what Thou hast written there, O Lord, but

Thou hast decreed that Osman should leave me, please, please erase it!"

After that prayer she hurried out of the place. She was running away from her disquieting thoughts of Osman's possible departure. Once out of the disagreeable gloom of the Bostan, her heart felt lighter. Osman was more than ever in love with her. Of late he had been taking a very active part in the affairs of the Sinekli-Bakkal. She had recently heard of his kindness to the dying Imam. And how generous he had been, how he had insisted on the very best of funerals for Rabia's grandfather! All that melted her heart. She hurried to the house and went up to Hilmi's room, where she would find the others.

Osman was already playing. The Pasha and Sabiha Hanim sat on the sofa and listened of old. They had objected to Western music, but now they were enjoying it because of Hilmi's love for it.

Hardly had Rabia crossed the threshold of the room when Osman's fingers struck into another melody. He was playing Abdul Hamid's March. The old couple rose instantaneously and stood with their heads bowed, Sabiha Hanim leaning on her stick. Rabia began to sing the anthem. Selim Pasha had for an instant the air of the old Minister of Public Security. The air had brought back a Selamlik scene: His Majesty going to the mosque . . . a pageant of colour, movement, and sound. All that grandeur arranged by Selim Pasha himself. He joined in the refrain of the anthem, and sang with a mixture of boyish pleasure and his old loyalist zeal. The little group of workers from the garden also joined in. "Live long, O my Sultan, in thy glory and thy state!" echoed through the house and garden.

Tears were trickling down Sabiha Hanim's furrowed cheeks.

"You shouldn't cry, my silly old girl; it isn't a funeral

march we are singing."

"The Sultan is seventy; it may be your last homage. . . ." Rabia whispered.

"No gloomy prophesy, Rabia. . . . I am going to send that piano to the bazaar to-morrow to be sold, Osman. Also the one at the Selamlik. The one in Durnev's room is enough for our humble house."

Osman's face clouded. He couldn't bear the idea of having the piano sold. It was against that particular piano that his eyes had measured Rabia's growth, as her height had altered from year to year. Impulsively he cried out:

"Don't sell it to strangers, Pasha!"

"To whom should I sell it?"

"I have pupils who want good second-hand pianos. I will see the one in the Selamlik too."

"All right, arrange it with my steward and pay your own price. I will go down and lend a hand to finish lighting the lanterns."

Rabia and Osman set out to see the piano in the Selamlik, and Sabiha Hanim called after them:

"Don't be too late, children! In an hour's time we will have supper."

The Selamlik was half empty. There were no carpets or curtains. It was all line and space, very simply but beautifully conceived. The window-panes glowed with the roseate hue of the sky, and with the silhouettes of the row of acacias beyond them, they looked like stained glass. The hush of the falling evening had silenced the nightingales. Now and then a single note, a sound in the nature of a long-drawn sigh, came to their ears. To Rabia the place seemed haunted. Among the phantoms that passed there was that of Tewfik. She could see the soft, womanish brown eyes filled with agony at the idea of losing his little daughter. It was in that

room that they had appeared, father and daughter, to ask the Pasha to let Rabia remain with her father. How soon Tewfik's image had faded before that of the man who now pressed her hand and led her into the room! In the tall mirror opposite the door a girl and a man moved forward, hand in hand. The intense reality of the man's face chased away the shadows of the past.

"What is it, Rabia? Your hand is trembling and you are pale."

"Let us see the piano and go back. I don't like this empty place."

The reflection of the man in the mirror kissed the girl; then, lifting the lid of the piano, Osman began to play an air with one finger while he spoke: "I have a delightful plan; let us talk it over here."

"Yes, yes," she murmured impatiently. She was in a hurry to get out of the room. His plans could wait. He had too many plans and he made them too often.

"I am buying the piano in Hilmi's room myself."

"Where can we put it, dear?"

"Plenty of room. I am going to rent the Selamlik and furnish it ever so beautifully. It's time for you to give up your lessons and rest. You will have servants . . . we must live, Rabia. Live as we used to on the Bosphorus."

His hands were on her shoulders, his eyes on hers. But his grip had lost its spell for the moment. She pushed him away.

"It can't be, oh it can't be, Osman!"

He moved away from her, greatly hurt. He had looked for enthusiastic acceptance of his plan. What the devil was the matter with the woman, to be so horrified by it? Would they never understand each other? There she was, an elusive, unaccompanied Eastern melody repeating herself all the time. He was like a complicated Western symphony: such a rich variety of desires radiated from him.

Rabia stood by the window and brooded over his proposition. She was more than disturbed by it. In the first place, a proposition to rent the Selamlik at that moment was tactless. Selim Pasha would not accept money from Rabia's husband; he would offer it. Then it would look as though they cherished a vulgar desire to get hold in a hurry of the remnants of Selim Pasha's past glory. She could imagine the general gossip in the Sinekli-Bakkal. She could hear them saying: "Why, Rabia is only an upstart after all. The moment she marries a man with some means she wants to live in a Konak. Who is she to have servants? Is she crippled? Can't she clean her own dirt?" And how lost she would be away from the house over the shop! For the time being she felt that her roots were firmly planted there. Her distress was acute, and her dizziness returned. The ceiling, the mirror, the floor, the flushed windows were reeling, blending with one another in the ever-moving mirror.

"What is it in my proposition that upsets you so?" He was angry. He was making a vain effort to overcome his disappointment. She was nothing but a grocer's girl stuck in a dingy back street. He had given up so much in life to marry her. And now, this fuss because he wanted to have a house with more elbow-room!

"You should have married a girl who would have enjoyed living in Konaks. One of those wobbly creatures whom we have met on the main street of Pera. I won't budge from my corner, that is that!" She had never been so defiant.

"But really, do you think a Konak impresses me? I was born in a house three times as large; it was a pal——" He stopped. He was almost boasting.

"All the more reason for you to have remained where you were. You could never understand people who eat their bread in the sweat of their brow. You are not fit to be one of us. You are an aristocrat. . . ."

She hissed the last sentence venomously. The difference of culture, background, race, and the rest meant nothing to her. But class-consciousness she could never tolerate. He almost hated her at that moment. She and her Sinekli Bakkal! He no longer thought of the good times he had experienced there; he remembered its dinginess, its squalor, and his servitude to it all.

"Let us go back," he said icily.

They walked back in silence. At the marble entrance-hall of the harem a servant-girl was going upstairs in a hurry to wash her hands. "They are waiting for you in the rose-garden, Rabia Hanim. The supper-table is set there."

Osman and Rabia found them at a round table in the middle of the rose garden. The flowers gleamed against the high box hedge in the light falling from the lanterns hung above their heads. Vehbi Effendi was there. Rabia kissed his hand and Osman greeted him in his cheerful fashion. The only trace of their recent quarrel was evident in the way they avoided each other's eyes. She was talking to Vehbi Effendi in her usual manner, though she had been on the verge of hysteria when she had entered the garden. Fortunately Vehbi Effendi's presence made such excitement seem out of place, it was fatal to all exaggerated expression; he communicated a sense of poise.

"After dinner the girls want to go as far as Bayazit. Will you allow Shevket Aga to take them?" Selim Pasha asked his wife.

"Certainly."

"And me too!" Rabia cried.

"You had better stay; I am going to read a letter from Tewfik," said Vehbi Effendi, producing an envelope from his bosom.

"Don't deprive Rabia of her walk read it now," said Osman.

"Has he already reached Taif?" asked Rabia.

"No, this is the last letter he wrote before he left Damascus."

All, with the exception of Rabia, listened to Vehbi Effendi with intense attention. She found it difficult to take her mind away from the set, harsh face, with its satanic smile, the other side of the table. The letter gave a full description of Hilmi's escape. Since the letter was sent by the hand of a Dervish friend of Vehbi Effendi's, Tewfik had no fear of its falling into the hands of the police. Hilmi Bey was happy. So was Tewfik. It had been hard to console Durnev Hanim. He begged Vehbi Effendi to tell Sabiha Hanim to send someone to fetch the lonely woman as soon as it could be managed. He himself would be obliged to leave for Taif. He finished the letter by asking Vehbi Effendi to comfort Rabia. He didn't mind going to Taif. Rabia might be at peace.

Osman watched Rabia furtively. She was toying with her food. He mustn't make a tragedy of their first quarrel.

After dinner Pembeh and Rakim came in, and the walking party followed them. The girls were wearing white veils round their heads, and long dark cloaks. Their old mistress joked and talked with them. The rockets and other fireworks were already at their climax. The air was full of a strange glare; thousands of tiny stars of all colours seemed to be raining on the rose garden. In the alternating flashes of orange, blue, and crimson, the little group laughed and clapped their hands. Rabia was among them, holding Rakim's hand. He struck a fantastic note of colour with his ruby coat and yellow turban. Pembeh snapped her fingers and danced round and round. How tall and pretty Rabia was, pulling the dwarf by the hand while he squeaked, made faces, and jumped up and down like a monkey on a string! It all looked like a circus in a dream. When the group had left the rose garden, when the giggling of the girls had died

away, Osman felt that he could no longer bear it. It was too much like his dream of life in the Sinekli-Bakkal before he had married Rabia. He was afraid of waking up and finding no Rabia at his side.

"I will go and provide you with music. You can make-believe that it is your old orchestra of the Jubilee nights," he said, rising and going into the Konak.

Osman had resented always finding Pembeh waiting for him in the kitchen, to light the way upstairs whenever he was out at night. Now he resented her absence. Perhaps they were not back yet. He struck a match and went up to his room. Everything was ready for him. The lamp was lighted, his slippers were set out before his chair, and his nightshirt spread on the open bed. She must have done all this before going to the Konak. He missed her fingers undressing him, serving him even while her head drooped drowsily on her right shoulder, like a fading flower on its stem? But why was she so late? The crowds had thinned in the streets. He heard a distant, drunken yell. He grew anxious. He must go to the room over the shop and wait for her at the window.

Pembeh's door creaked, and her dark head peeped out. She whispered:

"She was unwell, so we came back early. I made her a bed on the floor in the other room. I believe she is asleep. Do you want anything? I was too tired watching her, so I couldn't wait for you."

"I don't need anything," he growled, and went back to his room. Why should she go and sleep in another room when she was unwell? He lay awake for a time, expecting her to open the door and come in.

Pembeh and Rakim sensed the disturbance in the air. They ignored it. Rabia returned to her room, but she continued to sleep on the floor in a separate bed. He did not ask

for explanations. In public they acted as if nothing had happened between them. But the aftermath of their quarrel had degenerated into a perpetual sulking.

"The minx has done something to displease Osman," Rakim thought. It wasn't easy to get on with Tewfik's daughter. But he didn't like the settled sullenness on their faces. "He let her have her own way in the early months of their marriage. He is reaping the consequence of his weakness."

The evening they came home after seeing Selim Pasha aboard the boat, Osman lost patience with Rabia's cat. The symptom of his displeasure with Rabia was his lack of interest in her cat. That night he actually kicked the innocent beast, who was trying to climb up on to his knees. Rabia flushed angrily, but said nothing.

"When you can't beat your donkey beat its saddle," Pembeh quoted.

"The only way to tame a shrew is to pull the hind legs of her cat apart the very first night you marry her," Rakim said, and began to tell the popular story on the subject.

"Oh, shut up, Uncle Rakim."

Osman lifted the cat up and held it.

"Shall I pull its hind legs apart?" he asked with a twinkle in his eye.

Rabia pursed her lips. Pembeh laughed.

"One year too late, my Sugar."

Osman and Rabia looked into each other's eyes and laughed.

"I will go upstairs and play," Osman rose.

"I want to come up and listen; you haven't played for ages," the gypsy said.

Rakim pulled her skirt and begged in a mocking voice:

"Stay with me in the kitchen, Rakim's Black Pepper, his lump of Sugar. . . ."

bia had snatched up the cat and was already running up :airs, trying to overtake Osman.

!uarrels are not so bad, Rabia. They clear the atmo- e, but your sulking is positively unbearable. Especially you go to another room to sleep, pretending to be ll."

:t I wasn't pretending. When I feel dizzy in that queer can't sleep on a high bed. Illness is a novelty for me."

'e must call in a doctor."

o, I have never consulted a doctor yet. I am sure it was iorrible sirocco."

an it be . . ." He pulled her ear and whispered.

o, no!" She coloured, but she had her doubts.

ow shall we celebrate the day, darling? Shall we go and :he shops again? I am free in the morning."

h, let us go and see Grandfather's house. The new ts will be taking it over next week, and I have not seen the last eight years."

bright idea!"

jumped out of bed and pulled the bedclothes off his :lers.

et up, you lazy thing! You are worse than Tewfik for ; in bed."

hour later Rakim looked after them as they turned the r.

: and out of the pleasant and unpleasant valleys of ed life they wander," he said to himself.

unny day it was; there was a certain sharpness in the overhead, a clear-cut bareness in the outlines of the led roofs and the white mosque at the corner. Though leasant warmth of her reconciliation with Osman filled ieart, there was room enough in her mind for acute

curiosity in regard to the house in which she was born.

Osman opened the door with the rusty key which the Imam had used for years. In the deserted yard Rabia's eyes scanned the empty lines stretched crosswise above it. Osman was smiling at the sparrows hopping about the earthenware bowls in the corners. She led him to the kitchen first. There were no shining copper utensils on the shelf above the sink, but the board on which Emineh had chopped meat was where she had kept it, and it still showed the deep irregular cuts of her chopper. Rabia leaned over it. Her body had acquired a sudden tenseness: she was wielding a pretended hatchet, her eyes darting furiously to right and left. Osman could hear a sound, almost a growl, one which warned an imaginary naughty child that it was being watched and disapproved of. Rabia was introducing her mother to Osman.

"Take care, or you may be like her in old age, Rabia!"

"This well is haunted!" She led him towards the arch of the huge cobwebby chimney. She was taking him on a complete round of visits to the scenes of her childhood, doing the honours with grace, reviving the old days with consummate artistry. She pointed to the discoloured marble curb of the well An old bucket was there, with a coil of rope beside it.

"If you draw forty buckets of water after midnight, in the forty-first you draw up a treasure." She was pretending to let down the bucket and pull it up, her back bending and rising with the fury which Emineh used to put into every action.

"Uuuuuuuuuuuuuuu! Uuuuuuuuuu!"—and she mimicked the deep uncanny echo that rises when the bucket strikes the stone at the bottom. The realism of her mimicry touched the artist in him.

"I must put that eerie moan into my play!"

"What play?"

"My musical play. I didn't know its name. I will call it *The Enchanted Well*, in memory of to-day."

"You know Tewfik put my mother into his shadow-play, and she never forgave him."

"I would like to put you on the European stage."

"To hell with your European stage!" She made a wry face.

She took him to the first floor next. They went upstairs, their shoes resounding on the bare boards. The sun shone through the curtainless windows. The house was empty, the furniture having been sold at auction the week before. In the room where Rabia used to sleep with her mother they found a broken cradle. It was too dilapidated and too old-fashioned to be sold. Rabia stood beside it, looking down at it thoughtfully. She was at a loss to imagine Emineh beside a cradle, crooning lullabies. The tips of her fingers closed over the pole, rocking it unconsciously.

"Hoooooooo, hooeooo!" She was crooning a lullaby in quarter-tones, very softly and dreamily. Something moved in her loins with the sluggishness of a jellyfish. Very slight was the movement, almost imperceptible, as if it were afraid and trying to hide. An immense wave of emotion swept her off her feet. She knew that she was pregnant.

Osman had already left the room. She followed him.

"Think kindly of your mother, Rabia."

"I shall do so henceforth."

"When did you see her last?"

"In a coffin, covered with a Persian shawl, a bright embroidered kerchief spread over it. Old men with huge turbans carried it." Her knees flexed and trembled as old men's do when they carry a burden on their weak shoulders.

It was Osman this time who led her into the Imam's room. There too they found a relic of her childhood—the desk before which she had knelt to commit to memory those long passages from the Koran. Her fingers went up to her face and

ruffled her eyebrows, making them bristle like the quills of a porcupine. Her grave low contralto had fallen to the thick guttural bass of the old man as she chanted the Imam's favourite passages, with the selfsame fanatical passion throbbing through every syllable. She had heard his voice roar like that, night and day, day and night.

"On the day when the Heavens shall be as molten brass, and the mountains as tufts of wool, surely there is a flaming fire . . . and on that day they shall come forth from their graves . . . their eyes cast down."

"What does that mean, Light of my Eyes?"

"Shuuuut, it is the Day of Reckoning!" she said in mock solemnity, as she walked up and down the little room, chanting the most awesome descriptions of the coming world in the Imam's style and in his voice. Osman didn't care for the meaning of the words, but he was spellbound by the extraordinary syncopation of the girl's chanting. Nothing but syncopation, nothing but a perpetual beat, a pulsing of sound and emotion, the rhythm of innumerable shades of being . . . that was life. Beat . . . beat . . . beat! . . .

"Emineh and the Imam are nothing but clay now. They might never have lived."

In her voice there was a note of triumph. She was rejoicing that their ghosts were laid for good to-day. They could never trouble her dreams again. Her own blood was racing through her veins. Others might be shadows flickering on a screen and passing away, but Rabia lived. She imagined herself projected into the infinite life of all time: the expansion of the years never ceased! . . . Time was incessantly changing, circling, but through it all there would be a series of Rabias. In her loins she felt once more the sloth of the jellyfish pulsing with the rhythm of life. It was the next Rabia, whatever its sex. There would be a next, and a next--chained to each other, living creatures with Rabia in them all, and all

projected into an endless future. She had a sense of immortality because of the life in her womb. And that immortality she shared with Osman. In the continuation of herself they were united for ever. That was the lasting dream of her life; the rest was a passing dream.

Meanwhile, Osman, unaware of her fancies, was watching the sparrow hopping on the window-sill. It had once more squeezed itself through the lower aperture of the lattice. Osman had opened the window. He was thinking of the poignant concern of the dying Imam for the little "grey imp," as he had called it.

"We must tell the tenants to feed your grandfather's birds, Rabia."

"We will feed them ourselves."

"How can we do it, my dear?"

"I have decided to live in this house."

"Why should you, Rabia? You are so much attached to the other."

"I am, but I want my child to be born in the house where I myself was born."

55

THE Imam's house was being repaired. It was time to re-tile, whitewash, and paint it. The door of the courtyard remained open, workmen went in and out, and the noise of the hammer and saw could be heard along the narrow street. That was a novelty. No one remembered any house being repaired within the last twenty years by workmen from outside. The men did what they could to their roofs and the women whitewashed the interiors from time to time. All the eaves were awry, and all the roofs leaked after a heavy snowfall.

Rabia, Osman, Rakim, and Pembeh all visited it at different times. Building is an act of faith in the future of man; the work had an exhilarating effect on them all. There were always children in the Imam's courtyard, watching the workers with eager eyes. In the street they played at repairing a house. Women, too, encumbered the place. They came with jute bags under their arms, or baskets in their hands, gathering odds and ends. Some of them brought empty paraffin-tins, filled them with lime, and went back to their tumble-down homes to whitewash a kitchen or a room. The most wonderful thing was that the soul of the house had changed. It had been an abode of gloom and fear, a closed and forbidden corner, in which the Imam—the harbinger of the Day of Reckoning, of Eternal Fire—had lived. Now it had an amiable and inviting façade; Rabia and her pleasant family were going to live in it.

The street found Rabia's decision to live in the Imam's house only natural. It belonged to her, and she had opened her eyes to the world within its walls. Further, they were

grateful to her for the restoration. It was their only three-storied house – the architectural pride of the Sinekli-Bakkal. Her popularity in those days had increased by leaps and bounds. Above all, she was pregnant. Pregnancy, in that *milieu'* was the period of woman's sovereignty. She was in the act of peopling the world. Her rights were divine during that creative process. In Rabia's case the significance was special. She was going to establish the Imam's line. For, although unloved and feared, the man had represented religion in its ritual sense. Osman wondered at the natural and unashamed way in which everyone, even men and children, talked of Rabia's pregnancy.

"We ought to appoint Rabia Abla Imam of the Sinekli Bakkal," Mr Big-Brother announced in the coffee-house.

"I have no objections, but it is against the custom. Let us hope that her son will be our future Imam."

Towards Osman they were more than affectionate. He was going to be the father of her brood. They had marvelled at the girl's achievement in securing a man of such brilliant wit and learning. His influence over the turbulent element had been most beneficial. His word was law with Mr Big-Brother's gang. Withal he retained the confidence of the Elders. His stool in the coffee-house was between the two groups. Mr Uncle had become the arbitrator of all local differences.

At home Osman found the atmosphere a little disturbing. It palpitated with incalculable developments. Pembeh treated Rabia as if she were going to be the mother of a new Christ. "I know now how Joseph the Carpenter must have felt as the husband of Mary," he confided to Rakim.

The dwarf winked at him knowingly. "Without me to keep Rabia in order you would know the purgatory in which every husband with a pregnant wife lives," he said.

As a matter of fact, no one could deny the influence he had

over Rabia. The girl vacillated between spells of good-humour and gloom. She retired to the attic and closed the door upon Osman and Pembeh for hours together. Whether the explanation was sickness or mere temper they couldn't tell. At such moments Rakim could go near her, stay with her, even scold her.

"There is no country under the sun where pregnant women victimise the men folk to such an extent," he would say. "They send their husbands out into the streets at any unearthly hour in search of some rare fruit. How often have I seen men in their nightshirts walking the streets like ghosts after midnight, begging the night-watchman to help them to wake some fruit-seller! Even authority in this land is in their hands during their pregnancy. Oh, the heartless, unspeakable shrews!"

"Tell Osman of your own experience, Uncle," Rabia said one day, laughing mischievously.

"It was in the days when I was a young and famous actor," he began. "I was passing through a street in Kadi-Keuy. A hand tapped at a window, a voice from behind the lattices called out: 'Will you stop and turn somersaults, brother?' I knew it was some preposterous female who had taken a fancy to my acrobatic feats. I tried to walk away. 'You nasty dwarf, you monkey-face, it is a pregnant woman who asks you! Are you going to make her lose her child?' the abominable voice cried Yes, that mischievous yarn that a pregnant woman will lose her child if she is denied her wish is the source of all our trouble. Believe me. Osman, passers-by, very sober-looking men too, stopped and threatened me. I knew they would collar me and force me to perform. So willy-nilly, in the midst of the thoroughfare, I had to turn somersaults from one end of the street to the other, while the hateful female voice, behind the lattices repeated shrilly: 'Do it again brother, do it again!' "

56

THE preparation of their new house absorbed Osman's mind to the exclusion of all other interests. Rabia talked more about it, but she was beginning to be concerned about her own condition. It was telling upon her health, bodily and mental. For it was not only the occasional sickness that troubled her. She hardly slept at night. A strange restlessness took hold of her in the dark. She remained as quiet as a mouse, staring at the candle. A pregnant woman has an uncomfortable way of being troubled by the subconscious. The creative process within her body upsets the ordinary physical balance of her organic functions. In Rabia's case the disturbance was intense. Her mind was losing its admirable power of concentration, its lucidity. Her subconsciousness had become like a lighted aquarium, with strange shapes and disconnected sensations floating about in it. She was afraid to sleep. This distressing condition became intensified when her will was no longer valiantly struggling to keep the lid shut down over the creatures of her mind.

During the day things were better. She still trotted from one part of the city to another to give her music lessons, but it taxed her strength in the evenings she could hardly open her lips to say a word. She was becoming thin as a shadow; her eyelids were swollen and her eyes blinked at the light The eternal discussion between her and Osman constantly recurred. She must see a doctor. Cunningly she diverted his mind to the new house. The workmen had left the house; they were tearing up the stones in the courtyard. Osman was going to turn it into a garden. Very soon they would be furnishing and fitting out the interior; they were waiting

for the paint to dry. She decided to leave the matter in his hands: even promised not to go near the house until it was ready to receive her. She begged him only that he would not give too alien an appearance to the place.

"What fanatical hatred for all the things of Europe!" he remarked ironically.

"Not at all," she protested. She couldn't make the reason of her aversion to the European style clear to him. Her objections arose from basically different aesthetic conceptions. She was all for extreme simplicity; beauty was a thing of line; it was inherent in the structural form; it wasn't a matter of ornament. That incomprehensible West, which was Osman's cultural background, was a thing of bewildering complications. To Rabia its sense of beauty was measured by the amount of complications it could weave into things. However, to please and appease him she made concession after concession. She even consented to engage the Greek housekeeper of Osman's bachelor days. Pembeh's fitful efforts could not keep a house of seven rooms as Osman would wish it to be kept. Rabia herself was unable to lift a finger in those days. They were going to complicate their lives. No more eating in the kitchen! One of the seven rooms would be turned into a dining-room—a room in which one would do nothing but eat. How much like the silly rich!

When one morning Rabia was unable to leave her bed Osman took an early boat and called on the Princess. It was useless for him to urge Rabia to consult a doctor. The Princess could do it. She listened to his troubles, smiled, and declared that she would arrange that very afternoon for two of the best doctors to see Rabia. She herself would be by the girl's bedside to see that she made no fuss.

Rabia could hardly see her surroundings because of the swelling of her eyelids, but it was alarming to her to know

that two men were going to examine her. The only doctor she knew was Selim Pasha's old house-physician. He was a fatherly, easy-going person. The two men who entered her room were totally different. They were both newly risen stars of the medical school which called itself "German." Its craze for laboratories seemed to her new-fangled. It savoured of black magic.

The younger of the two men who came to see her that morning was of unusual appearance, being thin and tall and clean-shaven. He was the first man she had ever seen without a moustache, and he terrified her. His beady eyes were set in a lined face. For a man in the early thirties the network of wrinkles running into each other all over his face was puzzling. He had very white hands, beautifully manicured He moved them with rapid and decisive gestures, leaving them to complete his every sentence. Further, he spoke in a tone of command, in the manner of a Prussian officer. Such tones and gestures were hitherto unknown to Rabia.

They stood by the window and talked to the Princess in French. She smiled and looked across at Rabia. Presently she approached Rabia's bed, saying: "Now we must get ready to be examined"; and before the girl could understand what that meant, the Princess was pulling off her clothes.

"What, what?" stammered the horrified girl, but by then Canary's strong fingers had stripped off her clothing, with the exception of the flimsy vest which she wore next to her skin. The moustacheless doctor examined her while the other stood by the bed and spoke to him in German. Rabia, purple with confusion, felt her heart beating in her throat.

"Steady, quiet, we must keep calm!" ordered the metallic voice. At last he abruptly threw the blanket over her and left the room.

The second doctor had a tired face, with friendly brown eyes and a luxuriant brown beard. Her eyes clung to the

beard as a reassuring and familiar landmark. When, however, she learned that he was a gynaecologist, she broke down.

"Please, please!" she implored, her lips trembling and her face bathed in cold sweat.

When at last the second doctor left her she hung upon Canary's neck. The Princess dressed her swiftly and laid her down, patting and soothing her as she worked. Then she joined the doctors in the opposite room to learn the verdict. After what seemed ages to Rabia the Princess returned, but the girl could not gather from the smiling blue eyes whether the verdict had or had not been favourable.

"Your husband is with them," the Princess began.

"He has been plotting with you to expose me to this shameless examination!" Rabia growled.

"Shuuuut! don't tax the poor man's patience so much. It is all for your good."

"What is the matter with me?"

"There is an excess of albumin, they suppose, in your urine. The urine must be regularly examined. The swelling of your lids denotes that."

"No decency left in the world . . . what else?"

"I will let you know. Your husband will tell you about the rest of the treatment and their verdict," said the Princess evasively. Then, kissing Rabia on both cheeks with more than her usual affection, she added: "Be reasonable, Rabia; do what the doctors say."

She was gone. Outside the door Osman was talking to the doctors in French. It was a long while before he came in, and when he did he moved about restlessly, repeating hurriedly what the Princess had already told her.

"There is something else," she said without opening her eyes.

"There is, my dear." He was trying to be cheerful. "Your delivery would demand a difficult operation; what they call

the Caesarean operation." He explained what it meant and then, in a coaxing tone, he added: "It is of no use to go on like this. The doctors propose . . ."

"Abortion," she said in a terrible voice.

"It would be quite easy."

"Is this Caesarean operation necessarily dangerous?"

"I can't take any chances with your life. . . ." He was pleading with her, begging her to give up the child for his sake. She didn't listen. What he had told her already had made her realise the gravity of her situation. Life was sweet, and she was young, but her instinct for her offspring outweighed all reasoning. She recalled a chemist's window, with glass jars in a row. They contained foetuses preserved in alcohol. "Three months old," was written on red labels on each jar. The creatures had no hair, hardly any limbs; masses of featureless flesh. The jars expanded in her mind, they grew into seas of alcohol, in which foetuses swam sluggishly, blindly. In spite of the shapelessness, even the hideousness of the vision, waves of infinite tenderness and pity surged through her mind.

"No abortion," she said between her clenched teeth. "I will have the Caesarean operation when the time comes." A savage determination had crept into her voice. "What is more, I will live through it."

"Of course, of course!" he humoured her. He knew that all argument would be useless. She had opened her eyes at last. The glare in them frightened him. It was like that of a she creature in the depths of a jungle, with her cub in danger. To corroborate her assertion that she was going to live by act as well as by word, she asked for Pembeh, and sent her to the chemist's with the doctor's prescription, and raised her body a little more, leaning against a pile of pillows. The glare behind the swollen lids no longer left her eyes.

Osman fed her with sour milk, which she took meekly

that evening. After he had sent down the empty bowl he said to her:

"I want to go out to-night."

"All right," she said, her voice almost hoarse. He missed her usual soft call: "Don't be late, Osman."

Rabia was relieved when Pembeh went to see Sabiha Hanim that night. The gypsy was itching to report to Sabiha Hanim the exciting events of the day. Rabia, on the other hand, would be left alone with Rakim to discuss the situation. In every trouble he was her true ally. The stoutness of his heart made up for the lack of inches in his maimed body.

"Light a candle and put it on the stool at the foot of the bed. I can't bear the light of the lamp just now."

He did as he was told, and pulled a chair to the bedside. As he leaned over to get a good view of her face he was struck by its look of determination. In spite of its pitiful pallor and her sunken cheeks, there was something vital, something electric about the girl. He took heart; the tragic tone in which Osman had told him of the situation appeared out of keeping with the picture before his eyes. He let her tell her tale without interruption. Her voice was caught in her throat from time to time, but she struggled through to the end.

"Other women have been in your condition and have survived," he declared, but he stopped, and added uneasily: "You had better do what Osman says; he knows better."

"Do you know of any particular woman who has been through this . . . this operation?"

"Well, there was an actor in the open-air theatre by the name of Rejeb. He had entered the world by the wrong door; his mother was alive and a very strong woman too."

Green spots in the golden glare of her eyes caught fire. He

was as frightened of her as Osman had been now.

"Could I face my God if I let an unborn child be assassinated? If that woman has lived I too shall live."

"But abortion is frequent, Rabia. You ask Granny Zehra I suppose it is done when the child is not legitimate."

"Would I let it be done to me even if my child were a bastard?" she said in choking voice.

"Of course you wouldn't, my Sugar."

The girl was mad. No use to argue with her. But he realised that it was a madness shared by all she-creatures. Like Osman, he had a glimpse of the basic law, the fundamental force of life, dominating the jungle and human society through this curious instinct of motherhood.

"You must talk to Osman, Uncle. Let him stop worrying me with his mad and criminal desire to kill my child. Will you do it?"

"Vallahi, Billahi. . . ."

She sighed. Her features relaxed and her eyes closed.

"Shall I put out the light and go away? You had better sleep."

"No, I want the light there. . . . I want light until the sky whitens. It must be that way every night until my child is born. In the darkness I have bad dreams. Sit and talk to me Uncle. Never mind if I sleep. Don't leave me alone till Osman comes back."

He left the chair and sat on the floor. After a time she asked:

"Who was your mother, Uncle?"

"I don't know; she must have died of shame for giving birth to a changeling. I never knew her."

"Tell me about your childhood, little Uncle," she begged.

He told her, his voice getting softer and softer. The girl listened with closed eyes. The pictures of his childhood flitted across her mind. A quaint mixture of pathos and comedy.

On the screen of her inner vision was a dwarf-child. He played with a crowd of noisy, sturdy boy cousins. Though he had the sad eyes of a baby monkey, he had to be funny in order to earn a morsel of bread and pay a roof to cover his pygmy head. At night he slept with the same big brutal boys, terrorised by their heartless desire to get still more fun out of him. She could see them kicking, pinching the dwarf-child until he squeaked like a rat in a trap. At other times they tickled him under the armpits, on the stomach, on the soles of his feet. They all sat on him, the one with the cleverest fingers applying the torture. He was then seven years old. He must have been hardly bigger than a child of two. He had just had his first pink coat. But he had to mind the youngest baby cousin: a girl, who was cutting her first teeth. She cried continually, slobbered all over his lovely coat, and pecked at his nose or his chin with her shapeless mouth. The puking, mewling, dirty little baby! At last the young dwarf escaped from his uncle's house. Then came pictures of a happy world, that of the theatre, Tewfik's world. . . .

She laughed softly, sleepily. He had never told a story with greater realism. He was in an agony of desire to make the girl forget her own painful thoughts.

He heard her sigh. He stopped and waited for a while. She was breathing with the natural rhythm of peaceful slumber.

"No need to worry so much," Vehbi Effendi said at last, his eyes still intent on the Persian text of the Mesnevi. Osman was sitting on the other side of the desk, on the only other sheepskin in the room. The Christ-like face between the two candles had retained its serenity during Osman's long and passionate tirade. What he had to say he had said all in one breath, with a quickness and agitation reminiscent of Peregrini. Sheer exhaustion had stopped him at last.

Osman had come to Vehbi Effendi with a purpose. But the Dervish was taking Osman's words very differently from what he had expected. Not a muscle had moved on his face. He had listened serenely, and was now citing instances in which women had survived Caesarean operations. Rabia was a healthy woman; her very determination to preserve her child at the possible cost of her own young life indicated divine inspiration. Vehbi Effendi was on his favourite theme. Allah, the Artist, creating a new soul out of new elements. . . .

"I can't expose her. . . . If the chances of her survival were a hundred to one, I couldn't face it."

"If such is the Will of God. . . ."

"I am not reconciled to such a Will. . . . Your word is law with her; come and reason with her, put some sense into her silly head. . . ."

Osman could see the emaciated shadow on the wall shake its head. "No, she knows best . . . I can't interfere in such a matter. Within every soul is Allah, who guides and commands."

"But you have guided and commanded her in other matters; why not in this, the gravest crisis of her life?"

Osman could no longer keep the extreme irritation he felt out of his voice. Vehbi Effendi had been the only person of whom he had been jealous in a spiritual sense. It had not been without a struggle, without some sacrifice of his exclusive sense of possession that he had come to the Dervish.

"Human affections with you come after metaphysical considerations. I call that cruel. I thought you loved Rabia."

"But I love Rabia dearly!" There was surprise in Vehbi Effendi's voice. But he said no more for a while. Osman waited patiently, afraid to disturb the Dervish's meditation. Thousands of years of contact with mystics of the East couldn't make him understand the importance they attri-

buted to the soul. It was a pathological idea, a hypertrophical one for Osman.

Vehbi Effendi closed the Mesnevi and looked up.

"I will come and see her the day after to-morrow. Her objection to abortion may be religious. Because of her early environment she is easily beset by a sense of sin. I can make her mind easy on that point."

Osman had to be content with that, but both of them knew that Rabia's objections were not religious.

Osman had told Rabia of Vehbi Effendi's coming visit. He found her sitting on an arm-chair with a blanket over her knees. Her hair was as tightly and smoothly brushed back from her high forehead; it gave her head a curious sharpness of outline. Yet her eyes had none of the blurred and confused look of the preceding days; they had a purposeful light in their depths. She had mobilised all her faculties towards a single aim. Vehbi Effendi thought of her as a commander on the eve of a decisive battle. He who had championed the complete freedom of Rabia's soul now felt a little hurt because it seemed so entirely independent. Never had she seemed so little dependent on him. Even before her marriage. . . . Something stronger than love was at work within her. What could it be except life in its most elemental form?

He knew beforehand that whatever he had to say would make no difference to her decision. But he must keep his promise to Osman. He talked to her discreetly but clearly. Religion in her case would permit abortion. The savage glare which had frightened Osman leaped into her eyes.

"Do you believe Osman's horrid proposition is right?" she asked, passing to the offensive all of a sudden.

On his answer lay the fate of their future friendship. He was beaten.

"Whatever Allah whispers in your heart is right."

She rewarded him fully. His sense of being shut out of her soul vanished. Her eyes opened wide the doors of her soul, for him to enter and wander in at his will.

He rose; he was very pale. "Keep in good health, body and mind," he said, emphasising the word "mind."

"I will," she answered with splendid assurance.

In the street Vehbi Effendi said to himself: "Never forget, Vehbi, that love is immaterial; the face and name we give it, is merely the veil behind which Allah hides His Eternal Face!"

57

BOTH Dr. Kassim and Dr. Salim, the gynaecologist, were pleased with the improvement in Rabia's health under their treatment. She might pull through, she had unusual will-power, and she carried out in detail whatever they ordered her to do. Dr. Kassim became keenly interested in Rabia as a case. She was the only woman patient who had closed her mind to him, although she recognised the healer in him. And he was the first doctor who wanted to administer a mind-cure, a sort of forerunner of the psycho-analysis which years later became such a craze in the Western world. The idle rich had responded to him readily enough; especially women. They were on the verge of social changes; their class was experimenting with a more mixed society. It was a delicate undertaking, beset with dangers. Though the new nostrums were carefully dosed, though men remained wary and reserved, yet problems of a complicated nature arose.

Modern women found it an exciting novelty to talk of intimate matters to an austere young doctor with a professional voice and an authoritative manner. Rabia was conscious of no such problems. Professionally, and because of her humble origins, she was used to mixed society. No one in her class would have dreamed of talking of such matters to a doctor. For matters of the mind, as well as of the body, they preferred magic. Rabia made a compromise. She entrusted the doctor with her health, but she had her own system of mental hygiene It was simple but effective, and just what her condition demanded. She tabooed all unpleasant talk; all mention of the Imam, of Emineh, of her sorrowful experiences in the past. This was a system in itself;

it didn't encourage the monstrosities of the subconscious to rise to the surface. And she tried to look at pleasant and beautiful things. It was, after all, the traditional mental hygiene recommended to pregnant women. Osman found that she was collecting pictures of beautiful babies and gazing at them. Even in the street she never passed by a pretty child. She would gaze at it with the inward concentration of a painter accumulating data for a future picture.

Dr. Kassim continued to pay regular weekly visits, although Rabia was getting to look like her old normal self. Dr Salim was engaged for the final operation. This made Granny Zehra a little unhappy. She had thought of Rabia as her last case. But even she had nothing to say against intervention. All Sinekli-Bakkal knew of the strange and dangerous operation she was to undergo for her delivery.

Meanwhile the new house was ready to receive them. Rabia was enchanted with it. The transformation of the courtyard into a garden was successfully effected. Along the walls there were purple irises, saffron crocuses, and crimson geraniums in bloom. On the kitchen wall the newly planted honeysuckle and jasmine promised a colourful and perfumed future. Against the house itself, below Rabia's window, there was a vine-trellis. She wouldn't miss her bedroom over the shop. Osman had even thought of a pond. It was in the middle of the garden, with a round marble curb, and the traditional lions, sitting on their haunches with their tails curled under them, their mouths spouting water. The child would open its eyes to a lovely garden.

Elleni, Osman's Greek servant, received them at the door. Rabia took to her at once. That ample figure promised a motherly woman; she would make a good nurse. She had nice black eyes too. It is true that she had a moustache, and ugly single grey hairs on her chin. But Pembeh would see to that; she would teach her the process by which all decent

Turkish women got rid of superfluous hair on their faces.

The bedroom added to her enchantment. There was nothing foreign about it. Rabia sat down and grinned at Osman. So far there seemed to be no shocking change from her native environment. Only the heating of the house was changed. White-tiled stoves with roaring wood fires had taken the place of charcoal braziers.

"Come and see my den upstairs, Rabia."

He had chosen the big room opposite the Imam's. She had no distinct memory of what it used to be like. Emineh had stored in it the accumulated junk of years, which her miserly heart would not allow her to throw away. She had kept its door locked. It was the only place where Osman had dared install his Western background. To her it seemed like a bit of real Europe. She sat on the arm of a chair and studied it. Yes, all those books, those lovely pictures, the big piano from the Konak, and the general arrangement was foreign. But it had nothing of the overcrowded, second-hand, imitation look which she had so detested.

"I will write my *Enchanted Well* here. It has been pestering me to be written."

She realised with a pang that she had deprived him of all privacy and leisure in the other house. He needed his own private corner in which to work and think, just as the rest of them did. She, who understood more than anyone the blessedness, the necessity of privacy, had not allowed him any enjoyment of it. In the little house above the shop all the rest of them had privacy. Even Rakim could retire to the attic and shut his door. Osman lived under their eyes. She coloured, and blurted out:

"I shall see that you are not disturbed here, dear."

"I am glad you refused to take the Selamlik of the Konak; it was romantic, but in a way temporary. This is like home."

Praise be to God! Her heart throbbed with triumph. The

eternally restless and rootless mind of Osman had sensed the comfort, the profound instinct of home.

"We have turned a corner," she said, in a serious voice. 'We have stepped into a long and safe alley. No more uncertain turns. . . "

"Inshallah," she repeated. He mustn't defy Fate like that. She rose and went to the window. Evening was falling on the street of Sinekli-Bakkal. Osman's windows overlooked her old street from above the fountain at the corner. She could almost touch the white minaret that rose at the corner of the street, so near did it seem. From its turret a voice tore the soft dusk: "Allah Ekber, Allah Ekber!"

"Let us go down to supper, Rabia, we will keep the same hours here."

They walked down the stairs holding hands. It was a solemn occasion. Rakım had dressed more colourfully than usual. Both she and Pembeh had stuck purple irises behind their ears; and she was wearing her coral ear-rings.

After supper Rabia took Rakım by the hand and dragged him over the house. She must have been entertaining; she must have been regaling him with scenes of the old days, as she had regaled Osman; Elleni heard them laughing like children as she carried the dishes to the kitchen. The dining-room opened out of the marble entrance-hall.

Time flowed on like water in the new house. Osman shut himself up in his room the moment he came home. Rabia remained in her room and sewed. "He too is going to have a child," she would tell herself. "His will be called *The Enchanted Well*; what name shall I give mine?"

The afternoons were full. Everyone she knew visited her once. Everyone brought a "home-blessing gift." Ikbal Hanim was the last of her visitors. But the very fact that she had ventured out instead of sending her "home-blessing gift"

by the niece of the Chamberlain denoted a great sacrifice. The old woman very rarely left the house by the sea. She held a dainty packet in her hands, refusing to let Pembeh carry it for her to Rabia's room.

Rabia opened the packet the moment Ikbal Hanim was comfortably settled on the divan, after they had exchanged greetings. It contained the prettiest, filmiest baby vests. They were Ikbal Hanim's handiwork. There were few left who preserved the secret of those fine stitches. Rabia's enthusiasm over the little things filled her with pride.

"I hope it will be a boy," she said. There was a pause: then she spoke again in a reminiscent tone: "My own was a boy too. But that was fifty years ago. He had barred eyebrows, a line right across the forehead, there--a black straight line." A wrinkled hand traced the line of the strange eyebrows.

"Where is your son?"

Ikbal Hanim giggled in an absurdly pathetic way.

"I have never seen him since he was three months old. The very village he was born in is no longer there.'

Fifty years—that was an immeasurable age for the old nurse. Rabia looked at her, suddenly distressed.

"You see, I was sold to the First Chamberlain's parents as a wet-nurse, and that separated me from my boy," the old woman began again; and she told Rabia her story. It was simple enough. The First Chamberlain's mother had died the week after the wet-nurse had arrived, and she had remained with the First Chamberlain ever since.

"Cruel to drag a mother from her baby--slavery is horrible!"

Rabia's voice tembled with emotion, but the old woman had recovered her habitual complacency.

"It is the custom among the Circassians to sell their girls," she announced in a matter-of-fact tone. She had accepted her lot, and what is more, she seemed very proud of her present

position. Rabia had hitherto regarded slavery as part of the social order. She had not met any particularly unhappy slave. Indeed, slaves often attained positions higher than that of any free woman. Yet the sudden picture of a mother torn from her three months' baby, a baby whose dark level eyebrows she had never been able to forget, pained her.

The rest of the story did not interest her. The woman had been the daughter of a household slave of a Circassian chief. He could sell the offspring of all his slaves.

"The steward of the Chamberlain's father came to the village in search of a wet nurse," Ikbal Hanim was saying. "There was no one so good-looking as I, or who had such abundant milk. Yet when I heard that the chief was going to sell me I fussed and cried and tore my hair. Worry affects a woman's milk, makes it thin, spoils her price as a wet-nurse. So the chief came to the door of our hut and begged me in person not to worry."

The woman stopped abruptly. She could see in her minds' eye the hawk-faced chieftain of the clan, the tight coat he had worn, the silver daggers at his waist. In her tale the baby with the level eyebrows did not figure any further. It had receded with the fifty years. Rabia did not listen to the rest of her tale. She actually felt some relief when she accompanied the old woman to the door. A liveried groom was walking up and down the garden, waiting for his old mistress, so that he might be at hand to open the carriage door for her.

Rabia walked upstairs, taking the steps one by one, in the manner of a child still uncertain of its balance and clumsy with its feet. She felt tired, and leaned against the balustrade. She considered Ikbal Hanim responsible for what she was feeling. Why had she listened to the tale about the baby with the eyebrows? It had brought back her fear of Fate, with all its tyranny. For months she had struggled with an

almost superhuman effort to shut it out of her daily thoughts. How well she had succeeded! She had had no tragic thoughts in connection with the future of her coming child. Was all her effort going to be in vain?

"Perhaps," she said to herself, "it is due to my having relaxed the diet. I have not been taking my medicine regularly either. And why didn't Dr Kassim call last week?"

Owing to Pembeh's persuasion she had eaten some meat and eggs. Two things she loved, and two things she must not take. The gypsy, seeing her getting thinner and thinner, had pressed her to eat and recover some strength and flesh. It was then the beginning of February; her time would be about the middle of the month. She touched the amulet Pembeh had hung round her neck, and rememberd the serious air of the gypsy as she burned incense to the jinn, summoning them that she might persuade them to leave Rabia alone in her travail. But Pembeh swore at them too at times. Rabia had laughed at her fancies. Now that she didn't feel well she thought of all this a little uneasily. Perhaps it was better, for one's peace and comfort in life, not to challenge any power, seen or unseen.

"Ouuuuuuuu! Ouuuuuuuu! . . ." An eerie melody, like a subterranean echo, came from Osman's room upstairs. He was at his *Enchanted Well* again. The melody broke out again between moments of silence. She had settled herself on the stairs, listening, her head against the balustrade. The music had taken her mind off her fears. Osman was the only person among them who was immune from the superstitious fear which they all had of the unseen spirits. The thought of him was a great comfort.

"He is reproducing the noise of the bucket when it touches the bottom stones of the well," she said to herself, her mind altogether centred on Osman's musical play. In a way she

had a part in its creation; she sang him old airs and imitated sounds. He was a great master, but he did not know the language of inanimate objects.

"What is he driving at now? Ah, he is trying to make the fairy sing when he comes up, with the treasure in his hand, in the forty-first bucket. The fair slave drawing the water stands paralysed with fear."

No, what he was playing was not quite the thing. Fairies rising in buckets from the depths of old wells wouldn't sing in that stylised fashion. Her mind searched for some air connected with fairies. She couldn't remember any. What did the fairy look like? A Circassian youth with a tight coat and silver daggers at his waist, and a long, straight black line over his deep grey eyes? The astounded slave drawing water from the well looked to her uncannily like a youthful edition of Ikbal Hanim. Her mind had unwittingly got rid of its worries—it had brought the mother and the lost son of fifty years ago together. Now it concentrated all its energies on the song which the fairy would be expected to sing. It must be a song of primeval simplicity . . . raw sounds as it were . . . sounds yet not tamed by art . . . the very first rhythmic expression of uncreated humanity. Two harsh notes, strongly syncopated, should be struck against a background of wild harmonies—the storm raging outside the kitchen in which the drama was enacted. And she had found them, two notes and a half-note. Her memory had stored them years and years before, when she had heard a navvy, a road-mender, sing them at the roadside.

She hurried to Osman's room as fast as her strength allowed her. He was in his black velvet jacket, his soft white shirt-collar open, his grey hair all ruffled. His eyes were burning, his hard hands were working, and his face, with all its lines intensified, seemed like the web of a spider. He was running to and fro between the piano and the desk, playing

a little and writing down what he had played, but he was not pleased with what he was doing. His hands were raised in a gesture of despair above his head.

"Osman," she gasped, "I have found the song of the fairy!"

"Shuuut! I am busy. You must leave me alone!" he scolded, impatiently, harshly.

Leaning against the door she sang the two syncopated notes, one very low, the other very high, and the half-note like a broken sigh.

"That is it. You must keep on striking them against a background of the wildest storm."

He stood listening, his face lighting up. Rabia's voice as it sang, was like a sudden inspiration. He repeated the notes several times, with the selfsame inflection, and then, going to the piano, began to play. It was great; those lugubrious, tortured notes against the magnificent hurricane of harmony. She sat on the arm-chair by the piano, afraid to make the slightest sound. When he had finished he went to his desk and scribbled for a while. She heard the pen nervously scratching the paper. At last he came and sat opposite her, looking at her with a new light in his eyes. He was very conscious of her, but not of her physical being; rather of the force which he had never felt with such awareness.

"I believe that you are a song of Allah in person, Rabia. You are not only my wife, you are my inspirer and collaborator."

She didn't answer. He was troubled by her silence. His eyes searched her face. It was drawn, sickly, the lips tightly compressed and the eyes full of distress.

"What is it, Rabia? Are you ill?"

"Not very. . . ." She wiped the cold drops of perspiration from her face. . . . The girl must be in an agony of physical pain to look like that!

"But what is it? You can't be in travail yet; you must have at least a fortnight. . . ."

"Steady, quiet, we must keep calm!" She was imitating Dr. Kassim, making a heroic effort to set his mind at rest. She felt the shadow that darkened his mind at the idea of the critical or perhaps fatal operation which she had to face in the near future.

58

THE 20th of February. Osman met Mr Big-Brother in the street.

"We have missed you in the coffee-house, Mr Uncle. You have not been out since you have moved house. I hope you are not catching the old man's stand-off manner."

Osman smiled. His absorption in *The Enchanted Well* had been absolute. Even Rabia's turn for the worse had not been able to distract his mind. But he answered. "I can't leave Rabia Abla alone these days."

"Of course," Mr Big-Brother spat backwards lustily. "If you need someone in the middle of the night to call the doctors or to send to chemists, you come and yell under my window. Mr Big-Brother will descend to the darkest, hottest pit-bottom of Hell for Rabia Abla."

"So he would," Osman patted his shoulder. "One thing troubles my mind. How could one get a carriage in the middle of the night in case . . ."

"That is easy, Mr Uncle. The mews is in the next street. I will bring down the doors and windows of the place about the proprietor's ears. I'll get a carriage ready in five minutes. If the speed of horses is not sufficient for your purpose I will harness two of the swiftest runners of the fire brigade to the carriage. . . . Anything else?"

"The speed of horses is sufficient for our purpose," Osman laughed. "I will come to the coffee-house to-night."

"I will come and fetch you after dinner," Mr Big-Brother called after him.

He shivered as he walked home. There was no one in the street. It was cold. There was a lull in the air, and a low sky

... the red-tiled roofs. A sky of a uniform, dark, leaden grey. Where did the sky begin or end? It gave one a sense of something impending.

At dinner-time Rabia looked sleepy. Her sunken cheeks were aflame, her eyes both luminous and dazed under the swollen lids. They had been swelling again since the day she had sung those two and a half notes in his room and frightened him with her pain. Again an excess of albumin. Again a strict diet. Dr. Kassim was coming more than once a week Osman needn't worry. He remembered now that he had been warned of unpleasant possibilities. Rabia might have convulsions during her travail.

"You had better go to bed early, Rabia."

"Well I always do, don't I? But I hate it. Again those dirty nightmares, every night this last week." Her lips twitched.

"What sort of nightmares?" Pembeh asked. The dream of a pregnant woman, especially when her time was at hand, had some ominous significance.

"I dream of God."

"Forgive us, O God!" Pembeh and Rakim exclaimed, and Elleni, standing at the door, crossed herself.

"He looks like Grandfather. He stands in the middle of a terrific light, a blinding glare. All the Terrors he used to describe rise around him. I can't really distinguish anything, but I feel them there. Allah has a white turban, he stands always in the middle of the Hell-Light. He has Grandfather's beetling brows and harsh, cruel face." She stopped, and her hands touched her belly with a protective gesture. " 'Destroy the woman's child!' he cries out in a thundering voice."

"*Hristos ke Panayia!*" The Greek woman crossed herself again.

'You are thinking of the time when your grandfather

threw your doll into the fire, Rabia," said Rakim soothingly.

"I believe you have been looking at the pictures of 'The Inferno' in my room," added Osman.

"No, I don't look at anything unpleasant, you know that."

"I will tell you what, my child. When you go to bed think of a pleasanter God. . . . Something like Vehbi Effendi. There is no Hell in his religion."

"I will go up now. I am not hungry."

She rose. Osman's suggestion was good. She had been saying extra prayers now that her time was approaching. The Imam, that eternal tormentor of souls, must be got rid of somehow. She must concentrate her mind on Vehbi Effendi. Oh, why had he again retired to his cell for meditation and prayer? Perhaps he was praying for Rabia's delivery. A comforting thought!

"You go up after her, Elleni, and stay with her," Pembeh whispered to the Greek woman. "I will clear the table and wash up for you."

They listened to Rabia's steps crossing the marble hall. When they died away Pembeh looked at Osman significantly. She was troubled. Her conscience was not at rest.

"I believe she is jinn-struck," she announced in a mysterious and awesome tone.

"Shut up, you black witch!" Rakim fumed.

"Why should I? What do you know about it? All pregnant women are pursued by jinn—may they be in good mood! Rabia's jinni is either a Christian or a Jew. It won't be appeased by ordinary offerings. I have been so disgusted with it that I challenged it. . . . I even tried to punish it."

"How did you manage that?" Osman smiled.

"You know the nasty medicine which Rabia takes and makes such faces while she swallows it?"

"Well?"

I measured it out with the measuring spoon and threw it out of the window last night."

"Well?"

"Her jinni lurks beneath her window these dark nights. I am sure it was gaping, and I am sure it drank the medicine. Now I am sorry. It might have been enraged by the nasty taste. I am afraid Rabia may remain a jinn-struck woman all her life," she concluded, in repentant tears.

"I will strangle you, you wicked gypsy! You wait till the girl is delivered! Not a day will I let you live if anything happens to Rabia!" Rakim's voice sounded savage, and he spoke between clenched teeth.

"No need to worry, Rakim," said Osman. "The medicine Auntie Pembeh mentions is called bromide. It is good for the nerves of a fierce, vindictive fairy."

Over the white curtains of the room waves of light played. Someone was swinging a lantern and walking in the garden.

"Mr Big-Brother has come to fetch me," said Osman.

Their finger-tips and toes froze in the street. The cold was intenser. The lead-coloured sky had lowered itself over the houses. Osman felt that he could almost touch it.

"We are in for a snowstorm," Mr Big-Brother remarked.

From the depths of the coffee-house voices shouted welcome as they entered. No face was distinguishable in that heavy smoke-cloud. The panes sweated like the windows of a bathroom. A general and continuous drone, the gurgle of *nargilehs*, the rattle of crockery on the counter. The waiter came forward, wiping his hands on his red-and-yellow striped apron as his head turned towards the counter and shouted orders without consulting the new-comers. "One sugared, one non-sugared. . . ." Every crack of the doors and windows was closed. Not a whiff of air could enter. There

was a pungent smell of coffee and a stale, heavy smell of human breath.

Osman talked mechanically. Something within him waited and listened. His mind was concentrated on Rabia and the ominous atmospheric calm.

"Boooooooooooooo!" A sudden wind, a rattling and shaking of windows and doors.

"Snowstorm," all the voices repeated, one after another.

"I must go." Osman rose. Rabia was nervous in stormy weather. He communicated his anxiety to the inmates of the coffee-house; he had brought her image into the evil-smelling place. He hadn't mentioned her, yet there was no one in the packed room who was not thinking of Rabia's coming operation. All rose, but none spoke. In the collective silence was acute sympathy for Osman. Mr Big-Brother closed the door, pulling it hard as he followed Osman out.

"May Allah make it easy for her," everyone murmured to himself in the coffee-house.

In the street Osman's hands found it difficult to hold his cape in place. He had his fez tucked under his arm. The tumble-down eaves shook dangerously; he thought the chimneys were reeling with the impact of the wind. The lantern went out. Mr Big-Brother clutched Osman's hand and guided him through the moving and whirling darkness

The light in the kitchen burnt brightly. Rakim was smoking by a brazier in the middle of the room. Blessed are the landmarks of home!

"What news, Rakim?"

"All quiet in her quarters. Won't you stay and smoke?"

"No, she may wake up. What an infernal wind!"

"I am here if you need me. I am not sleepy," the dwarf called after him

As a matter of fact, he hadn't slept much that week. He

occupied the Imam's room on the top floor. His mind was obsessed by the sinister influence of the old man over Rabia's mentality. The girl's dread of the Imam made Rakim restless. Cool and collected though he seemed compared with the panicky and superstitious gypsy-woman, he couldn't stand the Imam's room that night. He felt the old man's ghost crouching in the corners, ready to snatch away Rabia's soul if he, Rakim, should ever relax his watch. As long as he remained there, his heart at her beck and call, she could never be taken away from him. Now, with Osman upstairs, his mind was easier.

He must have dozed. He was dreaming. Always of Rabia, and always of the time when she was a little girl, with her long braids of hair swinging on her back. Sometimes Tewfik's tall figure loomed behind her, with his long drooping moustache and soft brown eyes. Rakim comforted and reassured the father. Didn't Rakim's pygmy heart love Tewfik's daughter more than all the hearts of the wide and wicked world put together?

The storm was growing wilder, tearing the tiles from the roof. Its blows were like the sound of long-forgotten drums beaten in nights of Ramazan. Boys seemed to be singing the farewell song in the street: "Behold it has come, behold it is going, dum, dum, dum, dum, dum!" Would the girl pass away with the swiftness of a too-short holiday? The wind playing in the zinc rain-pipes . . . no, Rabia was playing on a tin tray as if it were a tambourine. She was turning round and round, singing, and her feet in their red-toed stockings kicked the dwarf. And Rakim acted the monkey, peeling nuts, turning somersaults, screeching! . . . Wilder and with greater and greater joy the slim fingers played on the tin tray, while . . .

Upstairs Osman sat on a chair and watched Rabia. Her face was not very distinct in the hazy gleam of the night

light, but he could still discern its tortured look. She moved restlessly and groaned. "Boooooooooo, boooooooooo! . . ." With intolerable speed the hurricane blew, from top to bottom the house shook. God, how like an unseen Fury, tearing all things from the surface of the earth in its blind rage! He tiptoed to the stove and fed the fire. It was a good idea of his to put stoves in the house. He sat facing the flames, musing. Was this the epilogue of his life in Sinekli-Bakkal? Would Rabia really die? One and a half years of married life. So rich in detail. All the unpleasant episodes vanished, evaporated.

"Are all men so strangely tied to their wives?" he was asking himself. But his marriage was not only that of mere man and woman. He was united to her by the similarity of their conception of life. What did it matter that he had been reared in a different environment, in a different culture? To both of them life was a perpetual play of sound, an unending rhythm.

Rabia was moaning continually now. The sound seemed almost to tear her throat. He lighted the lamp. Better wake her up.

The sight on the bed shocked him. Would he ever forget that sinister mask on her pretty face? She was in a crouching posture like some dumb creature, tracked, and trying to parry a death-blow. The features were contorted, the whole face swollen, and of a sickening purplish hue. Both eyes were open, and they had contracted in a squint. One stared like a coloured glass ball at his face, the other had no expression whatsoever.

"Rabia, Rabia, Rabia!" He was shaking her. But she was not conscious; she was in convulsions, and in travail too. He flew downstairs and shook Rakim, waking him from the delightful dream of playing the monkey with Tewfik's pretty daughter.

All the lights were up in Rabia's house. Pémbeh and Elleni raced hither and thither outside the room. Osman was rubbing Rabia's temples and wrists with eau-de-Cologne. Would the doctors never come? Time stood still; the storm raged, and Osman was pilloried in his agony of mind, face to face with the mask of horror on Rabia's lovely face.

Her first sensation of returning life was a uniform warmth round her body. She was in a bath. An elderly woman in white held her head. She was Dr. Salim's assistant nurse. A cock crowed, and an opaque light filtered through the curtains. The lamp was still burning. Rabia closed her eyes, listening to the hurried steps outside the room. The little room opposite hers was being prepared for the operation. She was conscious of being lifted out of the tub. What was this horrible pain in her bowels? Her mind groped in the twilight as her body contracted in a spasm of pain. A needle pricked her arm; there was a sweetish smell in her nostrils. A sense of void, of emptiness all around her—her body relaxed, and she sank into the welcome and liberating void.

The red-tiled tumble-down roofs were all white. Huge white flakes flapped softly at the panes and remained there. Not enough wind to shake the bare branches in the next garden. A fire roared in Osman's stove. There was a small round table with steaming coffee and a pile of hot crescent-shaped rolls on it. The doctors sat and ate heartily. Osman watched them.

"No doubt of your son being a musician, *cher maître!*" The bearded doctor laughed. "She sang under the chloroform! A musical operation, eh!"

Didn't Osman know! How his ears had strained to catch every sound from the operating-room from outside the door! And she had emitted such strange sounds. Some of them did

sound like music; he could distinguish errant notes from the opening of the Mevlut in the major key, bits of her mosque repertoire. And the two and a half notes of the fairy through it all. What a medley!"

"You are sure she will live?" he asked huskily.

"Doctors don't like to repeat themselves," said Dr. Kassim in his metallic tones.

"You don't know what it is to have a family," said Dr. Salim. "Yes, *cher maître*, she will live."

"The day she leaves her bed you are both invited. I will play *The Enchanted Well* and she will sing the fairy's song."

"Which was the fairy's song? That strange sound, something like the creaking one hears in old wells when they are drawing water?"

"Yes; she conceived those uncanny notes and told me to put them against a background of the wildest storm-harmonies. She sang them last night with a hurricane orchestra."

59

THE Revolution of 1908 broke out in July. It blew in blind fury, uprooting century-old institutions, felling ge-old tyrants, upsetting all political and social order. No one could say what was what and who was who.

Meanwhile the exiles of the Old Régime were returning. Tewfik was on one of the ships. He lay basking in the sun on deck. In an hour or so they would be in harbour.

Tewfik was the only one among them whose thoughts were centred on his family. The rest were mostly thinking of the limelight into which they would shortly step. They had left the capital under very different circumstances. They were then considered traitors and dogs, deserving only of kicks. Now they were heroes. It did not matter that some of them had been exiled for very dishonourable reasons. They would all enjoy their hour.

One shrewd fellow, who had been exiled for blackmail, was trying to market a bright idea. He would organise a "Political Victims" Party. No platform needed, nor indeed any definite principles. At the elections people would vote for them without inquiry. All they had to do was to recount their sufferings in exile, with a few embellishments; that was all! And what salaries, what privileges they would enjoy as deputies!

Tewfik, roasting his toes in the sun, listened to the talk. He was the only man on that exile-laden boat who had not been asked to join as a member of the new party. He had taken no interest in their discussions. He was only a clown.

At last they reached the harbour. The city of Istanbul was delirious with joy, was waiting to take the heroes to its

bosom. Tewfik wept like a child at the sight of the city.

He was on the quay, engulfed by a sea of people. He could see in the midst of the crowd Mr Big-Brother, and a number of familiar faces. The whole of Sinekli-Bakkal was there to welcome its particular hero and demonstrate in his honour. He pushed his way towards them.

Mr Big-Brother, who had caught sight of him, gave his orders. The crowd around him began to shout and applaud. Tewfik paused, intimidated by the ovation. The crowd was lifting a fat man with a red flag in his hand on to their shoulders. Mr Big-Brother had engaged a street orator, a popular man who had been acclaiming the New Régime with more noise than all the rest. He was to make a speech of welcome.

"I am here to welcome a hero of the people, a son of the freedom-loving Sinekli-Bakkal!" he began. He had a strong, far-reaching voice. His words caught the attention of a wider group than the Sinekli-Bakkal crowd. "This great exile has freed us from tyranny," he continued. "I salute him in the name of the nation, for he is a martyr of the Old Régime. Thou, O Brother" he gesticulated in Tewfik's direction, shouting with all the power of his lungs, "thou, O Lover of Liberty and Justice, I swear to thee that whosoever attempts to harm a single hair of our Charter of Liberty, our Constitution, I will burst his eyes out with these mighty fists, I will strangle him, I will make his mother weep tears of blood!"

The orator held out the hands which were going to do these things, hands which were going to be the guardians of Liberty. They were powerful fists, with flat and badly-kept nails. People applauded him frantically. And Tewfik recognised in him Muzaffer, "the Eye-burster." He staggered, as though in that accursed jail those mighty fists were still making the stars dance before his eyes, still reducing his

brain to a senseless pulp. He was on the verge of hysteria.

Two men from the Sinekli-Bakkal clasped his arms. He turned and saw Vehbi Effendi and Osman.

"What is *he* doing here?" Tewfik cried.

"He is praising the New Régime," said Vehbi Effendi.

"What, what?"

"Come along, there is a carriage waiting for you!" said Osman, pulling his dazed father-in-law away.

"Where is Rabia?"

"Looking after your grandson. Dressing him for the occasion. They are waiting for the hero!" This was from Vehbi Effendi.

"Grandson! Oh . . ." Tewfik's face was transfigured.

"You will add a baby puppet to your shadow-play," said Vehbi Effendi.

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